

Silly hats and big bucks

Window on Jordan

By Claire Younger
Star Staff Writer

I ADMIT to being a touch sensitive about my waistline, but if you really want to insult me, call me a tourist. "Tourist." The word conjures up grizzly images of overweight, blingling, ignorant hordes who descend on a foreign country, observe it's historic wonders, make plenty of daff remarks, usually make at least one major cultural faux-pas, then leave just as quickly as they arrived.

In Amman, the mass construction of international hotel chains appears to signal a serious tourist takeover. Or does it? Well, for argument's sake, let's say it does. Like it or not, these alien culture vultures are actually doing the country a favor—a big favor known as revenue! The Ministry of Tourism surprisingly doesn't have too much to say on the matter, but it is "transparent" to most people, especially those who have had the good fortune to don silly hats and sunglasses and go out and visit any of Jordan's 6000 archaeological sites, that we are living in a potential tourism gold mine.

Archaeology, the cornerstone of the Kingdom's tourist potential, presents some unique problems. You simply can't have thousands of unruly visitors stampeding all over your heritage for the sake of a few dinars. You can, however, manage tourism effectively and find solutions so that most people benefit from the industry. It is particularly important that local communities gain from what is often a major disruption to their way of life.



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The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

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AMMAN, 27 AUGUST — 2 SEPT. 1998, VOLUME 9, NUMBER 12, 350 FILS

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Lower House deputies angry about the way cabinet was formed

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

IT IS customary to give all new governments a 100 days grace period—to settle into the role of managing the nation's affairs—before analyzing their progress and performance. However, as soon as the list of new ministers was announced, many critics expressed amazement and despair. "We wanted to see some new faces, not the same old characters," bemoaned one deputy at the Lower House.



The 83rd government to be appointed in Jordan, headed by Dr Favez Al Tarawneh, reinstated 12 ministers from the previous government of Dr Abdel Salam Al Majali, as well as four senators from the Upper House.

Even the way, the new government was formed, created resentment from some quarters. Deputies at the Lower House expressed their anger at the way their council was ignored during the formation process.

"The leading positions in the country are being monopolized by a small group of influential people," said Amman, adding, "if the new government intends to be successful, it has to tackle the

Letter of Designation listed the priorities which the new cabinet must take into consideration. They included establishing greater transparency, accuracy and objectivity when dealing with cases of national interest, fighting nepotism, and eradicating poverty.

In response to the letter, the government promised to carry out all the Royal directives. This drew a rueful comment from Amman, who said, "To be honest, I do not trust any Jordanian government; we will just have to wait and see if they are true to their word."



Jordanian Islamist opposition leader Hamza Mansour shouts slogans against US President Bill Clinton during a rally in support of Sudan in Amman, 24 August. The United States attacked the Sudanese pharmaceutical plant on 20 August, saying it was involved in chemical weapons production and had links with Saudi exile Osama Ben Laden.

Israel agrees to turn over 13 percent of West Bank land

By Rebecca Trounson

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—New hope on the peace front was registered this week as Israel said Monday it has agreed in principle to turn over another 13 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians, the figure specified in a month-old US peace initiative. Israeli and Palestinian leaders very quickly sat down at the negotiating table. However, analysts say it is still early days, and that there is still a long way to go.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which had said it could not accept the 13 percent figure without endangering Israeli security, has told US mediators that Israel is now prepared to withdraw from that amount of land, if other conditions are met, an Israeli spokesman said. "What's left is for the Palestinians to finalize their security obligations," said David Bar-Ilan, a senior aide to Netanyahu.

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The decade to be named later

By Martin Miller

IT'S 2003. After three cataclysmic years of pestilence, earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, tsunamis and plagues of locusts, the planet is a horrible eyesore. But every dark cloud has its silver lining as two survivors, workers in a time-honored and expanding field, discover.

But for those less given to apocalyptic visions, and they are apparently in the minority, the vocabulary void exists for entirely comprehensible reasons that have nothing to do with deadly goo, a government conspiracy or bug-eyed aliens.

occurred was the brand new and incredibly powerful medium of television. As Americans watched these vivid images unfold on their small screens, there arose a growing need to make sense of the noise and chaos, say cultural historians. One way was to break up the fearful blur of years into manageable chapters.

US strikes receive mixed response from international community

By Tala Abu Taha

SPECIAL TO THE STAR
FOLLOWING ORDERS from President Clinton on Thursday 20 August, the US Armed Forces attacked sites in Afghanistan and Sudan in response to information gathered by American intelligence identifying Ben Laden's group as responsible for the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Six sites in Afghanistan were also pounded by American cruise missiles as retaliation for sheltering Ben Laden following the Sudan bombings.



A view from inside Al Shifa factory before it was bombed

tory and have denied they are producing chemical weapons in their country. Sudanese President Omar El Bashir warned that his country reserves the right to respond to the US attack using all necessary measures and has

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Fayez Al Tarawneh Man of the hour

By Ali Saadeh
Special to The Star

PORTRAIT



IN LESS than a year and a half, he made three somersaults. These were made rapidly but with method. For in March of last year, now former Prime Minister, Dr. Abdel Salam Al Majali handed him the foreign portfolio. And in February of this year, he became Chief of the Royal Court. Such an eminent position is a sure way to become prime minister. Despite exceptions to this rule—there have been just four prime ministers in the last 20 years who have not held the post of Royal Court Chief—Fayez Al Tarawneh, was groomed right from his very early days. Today he has reached the pinnacle of political life, becoming Prime Minister.

However, people in the know point out that most of the posts Dr. Tarawneh has held have not allowed him to show his distinct abilities. He was not allowed, for instance, to display his leadership potential, perhaps because his political life and personal interest revolved around economics.

The Karak-born Prime Minister obtained an economics degree from the University of Jordan. Later on, he obtained his masters and doctorate from the University of Southern California. However, it was in 1971 that he began his working life as deputy chief of protocol.

In the mid-70s he went on to complete his higher education in the USA, returning to the country in 1980. It was then that he became an economic secre-

tary in the Prime Ministry, staying in his post till early 1988.

Dr. Tarawneh's political life kicked off in January that year when then Prime Minister Zaid Al Rifai made him Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs.

He moved on again in December 1988 when he became Minister of Supply. This was to prove a fateful step, because the country was going through an acute economic crisis. The government was held responsible and subsequently resigned.

The young economist then tried his hand in the private sector. However, two years later he was back in government, joining the Jordanian delegation in the peace negotiations.

From then on, was at the helm of diplomacy, first as advisor to the Jordanian side of the multilateral peace talks, and then as Jordan's Ambassador to the United States. This was a post he held from 1992 to early 1997.

In Washington, Dr. Tarawneh gained a thorough understanding of the centers of power in the US Congress and was able to exert some influence on the American administration's understanding of the Middle East.

Commentators note that while the new Prime Minister has extensive experience in foreign relations; he is not as experienced in domestic matters. He needs, for example, to establish closer relations with the different political trends in the country. A number of pressing local issues are on the new Prime Minister's table which need to be resolved quickly. ■

Israel agrees to turn over 13 percent of West Bank land

Arafat said the latest proposal could be a beginning step toward reviving the peace negotiations. But the mistrust built up during 17 months of deadlock also was on display as Arafat accused Netanyahu of policies that have damaged the five-year-old peace process and engendered "despair, hate and violence," he said.

Arafat was in Oslo to commemorate the anniversary of secret Norwegian-mediated talks that led to the historic 1993 peace agreement signed on the White House lawn.

Netanyahu, who inherited the Oslo accords from his predecessors, did not attend the ceremony but sent a representative.

Arafat was scheduled to meet Monday evening with US mediator Dennis B. Ross, who also attended the commemora-

tion in Oslo. Israeli and American officials said Ross could decide to fly to the Middle East from Norway if there appeared to be a chance that another round of mediated talks could produce a breakthrough.

All sides cautioned, however, that many obstacles remain in the path to an accord. There is still no agreement, for example, on other aspects of the American initiative, including Israel's insistence that the Palestinians provide a concrete plan for cracking down on extremist groups that operate inside Palestinian-controlled territory and the Palestinian demand for a halt in the expansion of Jewish settlements on occupied lands. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

US strikes receive mixed response from international community

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chemical weapon production. International reaction to the strikes varied. Security General of the UN Kofi Annan said that he was only informed about the attacks minutes before the strikes occurred. China issued a cautious re-

sponse which neither supported nor condemned the attack. Israel welcomed the US decision to strike, as did the British.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin condemned the US action. Pakistan denounced the strikes on neighboring Afghanistan and on Sudan. The Arab League condemned the strikes, denouncing any type of terrorist act, but no individual Arab country denounced the strike bluntness except for Iraq and Libya. ■

For the Record

Jordan and Egypt cooperate AMMAN (Petra)—Officials from the Civil Aviation Authority from both Jordan and Egypt will hold a bilateral meeting in Amman next month to discuss possibilities of linking tourist sites in both countries with regular and casual flights. Director General of Royal Wings, Abid Qintar, said. Mr. Qintar pointed out that both sides seek to operate daily flights between Aqaba, Sharm Al Sheikh and Hurgada, and four weekly flights between Amman and Cairo to encourage tourism and the movement of businessmen between the two countries. Regarding the Amman-Lamaca route, he said that aviation officials from Jordan and Cyprus will hold a meeting on 8 September, to discuss possibilities of operating four regular flights a week for Royal Wings on this route.

Minister of Information statement

AMMAN (Petra)—Minister of Information Naser Judeh reiterated on Tuesday the fixed stand on Jordanian foreign relations. "We consider our Arab relations as a priority," Judeh said, during a meeting with reporters this week. "Jordan welcomes any agreement between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, but the government wants to be sure regarding the contradictory information about the second stage of Israeli withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank," the minister said. Concerning what happened in Sudan, Judeh said that "Jordan rejects terrorism, and is against those who commit terrorism since innocents pay the price of violence and counter violence. Jordan is for dialogue between Sudan and USA, because Jordan believes in dialogue as a means to tackle disputes," Judeh said. Concerning the Lockerbie issue, the minister pointed out that His Majesty King Hussein called on the American President, the Minister of Defence, and President of the Congress to solve this issue.

Jordanian Scientific Week AMMAN (Petra)—Under the patronage and upon directives of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, who is also the President of the Higher Council for Science and Technology, the Sixth Jordanian Scientific Week will open on 1 September under the title "The Strategy of Human Resources Development." Mubasher Al Masri, president of the National Center for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) and the Head of the Fair's Steering Committee said participants will discuss the draft plan for a national strategy on human resource development, which was compiled by a team of specialists from the NCHRD and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS). Speaking at a press conference, Masri said a group of specialists and experts from the private and public sectors, non-governmental bodies, as well as from some regional and international organizations will be taking part in the week's activities, to finalize and approve the strategy.

The decade to be named later

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1896. Their bright idea was to decree that the first decade of the 20th century should be known as the "Naughty Naughts," according to Freitag.

Somewhat, millennium observers doubt the idea will catch on 100 years later.

The vexing question was recently the subject of an informal Internet chat, says O'Leary, who noted the following offerings: the Two Thousands, the Twenty Ohs, the Oh-Ohs, the Double Ohs, the Zeros, the Aughts, the Oughts and the Oughties.

"A name will crop up," maintains Fogo, who has writ-

ten several books about popular culture. "We're talking about it already. My money is on the folks at Time magazine and Newsweek."

Like the decades of the late 20th century, a nickname for the next decade probably will stem from a character trait of its time—whether real or perceived. Will it be selfish enough to be another Me Decade such as the '70s? Or as greedy as the '80s? Or as full of bull (the stock market, the NBA, the White House) as the '90s?

While far from a consensus, some millennium watchers predict a potentially surprising trend for a time period soothsayers will be consumed by

disaster and catastrophe. These observers predict it could be a time of hope.

"Once we get past the millennial year, a lot of fear is going to be alleviated," O'Leary says. "The cycle of cynicism that's dominated for so many years could fade away and it could be replaced by a new wave of idealism."

Naturally, others hardly believe the next decade will be remembered as the Idealistic '00s. While concurring that this decade in America has been one of unparalleled disillusionment, Virginia Tech professor Marshall Fishwick believes the next one may be worse.

"I think we are in for some

rudder shocks," said Fishwick, who is tabulating a pop-culture scoreboard for the century. "Every great empire makes the had mistake of believing it can run the world. We're already vastly overextended around the globe, and I see some real setbacks in terms of American wealth and prestige."

Whatever the millennium brings, whether peace and harmony or unremitting pain and misery, shouldn't it be the hope of every citizen of the world that that annoying Prince song never be played again? ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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Silly hats and big bucks

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the importance of managing the flow and impact of the ubiquitous bus boards that come, see, (though hopefully stop short at conquering) their nations.

Failure to contain these ice-cream guzzling, photomaniacs could be calamitous. Mind you, failure to give them what they want may mean courting economic disaster. Stephen Spielberg would be able to make a disaster film about it. Imagine... Amman, 2000. A ghost town of high rise hotels, lonely pianists singing to bars full of no one, soups overflowing with unpurchased carpets—a real tear-jerker!

But wipe away those tears—official statistics tell us that things are still rosy! There has been a two percent increase in the number of tourists coming to the Kingdom so far this year. Travel

agents too seem happy enough but keep stressing that more must be done to market the Kingdom as a tourist destination overseas.

Marketing is wonderful. It can mean so many things to so many people. But it is really much more simple than that.

Remember, tourists are a fussy lot. The question the industry should really be asking is "are we giving them what they want?" Four hundred Gulf tourists who turned round at the border recently because they thought there wasn't any clean drinking water in the country clearly didn't think so. Yes, you could argue that that was a one-off situation, but the bottom line is that infrastructure and amenities are key factors in the development of a successful tourist industry.

Then there is service. These foreign fops want to take a drink in the shade,

in a certain standard of establishment without feeling they are being ripped off. Yes, yes, of course they are being ripped off—even they know that! The trick is to create the sensation that everything is being done above board. However wonderful a country is, excessive profiteering and dishonesty do not incline the average tourist to return.

While major issues such as future water provision and quality accommodation are being addressed, smaller details—such as providing a few more seats at some sites—could easily be implemented at minimum expense.

Clearing up the donkey poop around Petra, for example, was a real winner! You can bet your bottom dollar that these little touches will mean as much to Elmer and Jolene, or Uqba and Hamidah, as the magnificence of the Siq itself. Sad, but true! ■

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ARAB BANK PLC Given New Rating

Senior Debt: assigned AA-
Short-Term: assigned TBW-1
Issuer : assigned B

Thomson BankWatch is pleased to announce the assignment of new ratings for Arab Bank PLC. The rating exercise for Arab Bank was indeed unique as the legal structure of the bank is unlike anything previously seen, even when compared to developed markets. While typically it is unusual to split a rating as such, the very nature of the legal structure of Arab Bank necessitates such an action.

Arab Bank PLC can lay claim to one of the longest and decidedly the most distinguished histories of any bank in the Middle East region. The bank's origin pre-dates World War II and has continued on during periods of regional turmoil and strife that would have severely tested and destroyed the resolve of many institutions not just regionally but globally. If similar circumstances were applied. During all of these periods, the bank has not just weathered each crisis, but in every case benefited and emerged even stronger.

Arab Bank can be described in at least two ways. The first way, the bank is clearly a survivor. The second way is that the bank's own name can be a misnomer, especially from risk profile perspective. While the bank is headquartered in Amman Jordan, the overall country risk profile resembles some of the best banks domiciled in both Western Europe and the United States. The bank brings with it a long history and a philosophy that its customers are indeed "first and most important." It is this philosophy that has created the bank that exists today and that can lay claim to be a peer bank when compared to some of the best banks in the world. This philosophy has also moved Arab Bank into being one of the only true "right to quality" banks in the Middle East.

Arab Bank is diversified over a broad geography where operations comprising



Abdul Majeed Shoman, chairman of the Arab Bank Group

more than 80% of consolidated activities are conducted outside of Jordan.

The unique capital structure enables the bank ratings to be considered independent of any sovereign rating for the country in which the Arab Bank is headquartered. Further there are sufficient legal precedents and opinions which indicate that any potential extraordinary seizure of Arab Bank external assets by local regulatory authorities is highly unlikely and not valid under most if not all legal jurisdictions. Accordingly, as the vast majority of Tier I capital, and assets are outside of Jordan thereby greatly diminishing the element of transfer risk and as a hard currency (US Dollar) is the functional currency for Arab Bank. Thomson BankWatch employs the global ratings scale for the Arab Bank rating.

Asset quality is extremely solid given the history of expertise cultivated and applied to lending. Additionally, a con-

servative level of loan loss reserves is maintained to fully cover non-performing loans. The tenor of the loan portfolio is quite short with 80% scheduled to mature within one year as of YK97. Total loans for Arab Bank typically represent less than 50% of assets.

The stability of earnings is enhanced by the conservative asset/liability management as well as the leading strategy and geographic diversification. Also supporting the sound financial position is a healthy capital base with the BIS Tier I ratio exceeding 12% and shareholders' equity to assets of nearly 9%.

Arab Bank is well established and dynamic, as demonstrated in its sound performance and impressive perseverance. Management has planned for any potential disruption in the Arab Region by building capital in its branches. In some of the world's major financial centers. Even in the unlikely event of a regional difficulty affecting more than Jordan, Arab Bank has more than sufficient asset liquidity to repay all foreign currency obligations. As Arab Bank has several sizable subsidiaries, affiliates, and an extensive network of international branches, the bulk of consolidated equity is housed outside of Jordan. Management has coordinated the broad geography of banking operations through the hubs in Amman, London and Geneva.

The underlying strategy has been a focus on serving Arab communities worldwide, particularly through trade finance both on and off the balance sheet. Credit quality is solid, as are loan loss reserves and capital. Management prefers to maintain a high degree of liquidity mainly in conservative inter-bank placements and government securities. Consequently, returns have been modestly lower than those of diversified international banks. Management's successful and well developed strategy provides the foundation for the continued sound expansion of operations. ■

مكتبة النهر

JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional
report on Jordanian
news and views edited
by Marwan Al Asmar

Bread for the people!

■ **Surprise, surprise.** One of the first things that the government could be doing is to lower the prices of bread, in line with the falling international wheat prices. According to press reports this is likely to happen when Prime Minister Fayez Al Tarawneh returns from Washington where he is meeting His Majesty King Hussein.

Curse

■ **Unemployment is the curse of all evils.** You can bet your life that everybody goes through it at one time or another. And it affects all professions, especially the ones you would least likely expect to find. In that respect, a latest study concerning unemployment amongst doctors was particularly revealing. Conducted by Jordan's Medical Association it found that between 10 to 15 percent of young doctors experience unemployment in the first four years after graduation. The study suggested that the percentage of unemployment of this group is between five to eight percent in any one of those initial years. Further it suggested that "over-employment" in private clinics reaches as high as 20 percent. And doctors are not as rich as is commonly believed. Doctors who can be categorized in the high income bracket is no more than five percent of the total physicians in this country. The study showed that this was due to number of factors: the high rate of medical students, and the Gulf War which meant that quite a lot of the doctors practiced in the Gulf, and Kuwait, especially, came home.

Get your water

■ **At last the mineral water imported from Saudi Arabia is hitting the market in full swing.** Having completely checked it to make sure that it meets the required standard, the Ministry of Supply has now fixed the price of a bottle of 1.5 liters at 300 fils. The Ministry has even fixed the price rate for shopkeepers. They can buy from Ministry warehouses at Jowdeh. Each carton, which contains 12 x 1.5 liter bottles, will cost them JD 3,120 fils. The Ministry says that the merchant or shopkeeper can sell the carton to the consumer at JD 3,600 fils. However, the merchants can't buy more than 50 cartons a day to sell to the consumers. Also, the import of mineral water from Syria—a total of 400,000 liters—is being sold through Civil Consumer Cooperatives in the country. But there are people still who are balking up the prices, which consumers can't do anything about. Meanwhile, and in a bid to secure water supply to Amman, Iran expressed its willingness to finance the project for transporting water from Al Disi reservoir to the capital.

US Embassy

■ **The American Embassy in Amman has received a bomb scare alert earlier this week.** The police searched the embassy after it received an anonymous call that there was a bomb in the embassy compound. This turned out to be a false alarm. Last week the embassy received another warning.

Voluntary society closures spark community concern

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES in Jordan have provided a vital support role to thousands of needy people in Jordanian society since the 1930s. Today, with eleven percent of Jordan's population living in absolute poverty, and 26 percent in absolute poverty, the government's recent action to close down some of these much needed voluntary organizations has sparked concern from local communities.

Rebbit Qatoom, director of the research center at the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), traced the history of Jordan's voluntary sector and explained how it has adapted to changing needs.

"The huge influx of Palestinian refugees following the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 led to a sudden increase in homelessness, poverty and unemployment. At the beginning of the 1950s, more societies were founded, specializing in providing assistance and financial aid to the elderly, the homeless and to orphans."

Qatoom continued, "The '80s saw a change in the concept of voluntary and charitable affairs with the introduction of the National Comprehensive Plan for Development. Instead of being just fund organizations, the voluntary societies moved towards productive projects in



Orphans—one of the many groups which benefit from work of voluntary societies

all fields such as agriculture, cattle and goat breeding, weaving, clothing and others." Nowadays, according to Qatoom, no less than 400,000 people benefit from these projects every year. So why have steps been taken to close down some of these societies?

Dr Muhammad Kheir Mamer, Minister of Social Development (MSD) stressed first

of all that the ministry plans on the theoretical basis that the percentage of absolute poverty is 30%.

Concerning the recent society closures he added, "Twelve voluntary societies, which the ministry closed had failed to meet the purpose they were established for."

He added, "We found out that some of the societies were using 80 percent of their budget as salaries for the employees while the rest is left to charitable contributions."

Needy people, however, are more concerned with the lack of adequate services offered by some of these societies, and some are disillusioned by the way they are run.

One old man who had hoped for assistance from his local voluntary society for his handicapped son commented, "When the society declared that more services would be made available to the handicapped in the area many were very optimistic. Our hopes faded, however, as we realized that the aim of its members is just to take salaries and misuse funds."

The head of this small voluntary society denied these accusations but refused to say anything in its defence.

The president of another dissolved society was unwilling to discuss the reasons for closure, and simply stated that they had been experiencing "administrative problems."

So what is the future of Jordan's voluntary sector? Mamer explained the government's position. "Despite some abuses, I am satisfied with the voluntary services in the Kingdom. In fact the government currently carries out 65 percent of voluntary tasks and the private sector carries 35 percent of these operations. These figures will be reversed in the coming days, since the private sector is expected to carry out more voluntary tasks."

There are currently 100,000 volunteers working in the social field, in 754 voluntary societies.

Clearly, however, demand still outweighs supply. Whether support comes from the public or private sector, the real issue appears to be that it is quality, rather than the number of societies in existence, that determines the effectiveness of the voluntary sector as a whole. In the light of these closures stricter supervision is a priority.

Prince stresses civil defence priorities

AMMAN (Petra)—His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, chaired a meeting at the Royal Court, Tuesday, to discuss the Civil Defense Dept's spending priorities for the coming year. The meeting—part of preliminary meetings, aimed at identifying the state's expenditure priorities prior to drafting the 1999 General Budget Plan—was attended by the responsible cabinet ministers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Meri Ka'abneh, and Directors of the Departments of Public Security, General Intelligence and Civil Defense.

In previous meetings, the spending priorities of the Armed Forces and the Public Security Department were reviewed. The Regent stressed the important role undertaken by the Civil Defense personnel, noting their efforts to protect people's lives and properties.

Crown Prince Hassan said tackling spending priorities and the needs of the Civil Defense Department, means discussing the needs of the society and the economic sector in this country. This is because Civil Defense affects society, both economically and socially. The Regent stressed the importance of education, focusing on the quality of performance and work productivity of the civil defence cadres.

Director of the Civil Defense Dept., Brigadier Theeb Ma'ani, gave a briefing on the department duties and expenditure priorities. He said the responsibilities of his department were increasing in the light of economic development, population growth and new construction activities. The Regent stressed that the 1999 State Budget will be worked out on the basis of a scientific, practical and objective study of spending priorities.



The issue of water contains to occupy the minds of the many

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LIFE'S NEWSSTATION



"She hates me... She hates me not... She hates me..."

Our Say...

America's folly

AS THINGS stand today, we may never know for sure if Al Shifa Pharmaceuticals Factory—which now lies in ruins in the suburbs of Khartoum—was involved in dubious activities, such as producing or developing deadly chemical agents. What we do know for sure, is that the factory—financed and supported by legitimate African money and international bodies—did produce much needed anti-histone and animal vaccines.

When US Cruise missiles leveled the plant early this week, Washington told a stunned world that it had physical evidence that chemical agents were being manufactured there. The US attack, which also hammered a number of sites in Afghanistan (dubbed as "terrorist training camps" by American officials), came in the wake of the terrorist bombings in Nairobi and Dar Es-Salaam. The Cruise missile attacks were aimed at undermining the infrastructure of Saudi-born Osama Bin Laden, who the US now considers as prime suspect in the embassy bombings.

Yet, at the time of writing, Washington has failed to produce convincing evidence that ties Bin Laden to the embassy bombings, and the Khartoum factory to chemical weapons. There is evidence linking Bin Laden to Al Shifa plant, either. It is always Washington's word that we must believe, and it is always Washington's actions that must be accepted, without questioning.

American foreign policy has not been popular with the Arab and Muslim worlds for understandable reasons. Bombing a pharmaceuticals factory in Khartoum adds to our indignation and disgust at such a policy. Starving millions of Iraqi children is the ultimate manifestation of such a policy. International norms, laws, conventions, treaties and others have been made redundant by this latest and blatant US action.

Again we ask, where is that incriminating evidence? And if such evidence existed, was America's rash and irresponsible response justified? President Clinton, reeling from a personal crisis at home—that has already tarnished his presidency and may bring its early demise—needed to deflect public attention from the Monicaagate scandal. With no evidence to put forward, and his own credibility at stake, why should anyone believe his claims about the Khartoum plant and even Bin Laden's complicity?

The simple truth is that the United States has broken the law and is itself a renegade. In our eyes it is no different from terrorists who bomb innocent civilians and "soft targets" to pursue their own political or personal crusades. Mrs Albright called it the war of the future, a war where Washington treats the world as its own to bomb and terrorize.

Mr Clinton's plan to deflect attention will not work, and the US may pay a heavy price for this latest folly.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vallebek and former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres give a news conference in Oslo 24 August. Arafat is on Oslo to "celebrate" the fifth anniversary of the Oslo agreement.

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Jordan Press & Publishing Co. (Ad-Dustour).
Editorial & Advertising: Telephone 5664153 Fax 5667170
P.O. Box 591 Postal Code 11118 Amman - Jordan. e-mail: Star@orabia.com
URL: http://www.star.orabia.com

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Will Mr Scandal bombard my house too?

By Jihad Abdullah

PRESIDENT CLINTON has the right to a private life, regardless of whether it is decent or not! But what he doesn't have the right to is to let his own private problems be the direct cause for killing people and damaging their property. This is not a political statement aimed at condemning the US attack on the Sudanese Shifa factory, but a logical conclusion that every observer of recent events will agree with.

The recent raids—especially the one over Sudan—were totally unjustified. Clinton said they were in response to the recent events in Kenya and Tanzania, but how can these acts be justified when the FBI chief in Nairobi said, only 24 hours after the raid, that the investigation were far from being complete! So it wasn't the investigations. There doesn't seem to be any political motives either. Do you think that the recent Lewinsky scandal had anything to do with it?

The president's decision seems to be another attempt to distract public opinion away from his "improper relationship." His decision lacks justification, as the Sudanese bombing raid shows. The Shifa factory was in fact a pharmaceutical factory, and it is nonsense to say it was used to produce the VX gas. If this was a VX plant, then bombing it without warning, without removing innocent civilians from the factory's perimeter, is an even greater crime. As we all know, VX is a gas and any dam-



age to its containers (through an attack for example) would enable this highly dangerous nerve gas to disperse into the surrounding environment, killing every living creature in its path. Fortunately, this didn't happen, because there was no dangerous gases there! But if the gas was there, and

we believed in what Clinton said, then what was the president's real target: the factory or the civilians?

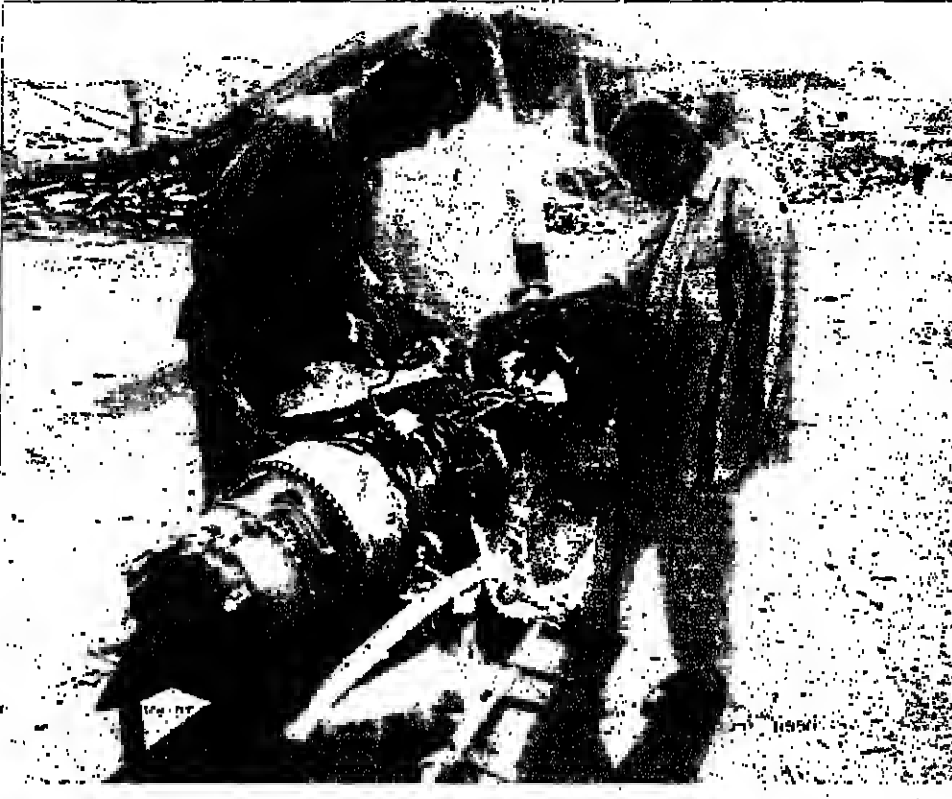
Moreover, I can see an economic equation in the attack on Sudan. Before the raid, Sudanese officials claimed many times that they had been warned by US officials to reduce their annual production of wheat; it was not to exceed their annual needs. The United States is fighting an economic war against the whole world. Sudan, Libya, Iraq and Nigeria can testify to this. Libya faced the wrath of the US after the opening of an artificial river, providing irrigation to a vast area of land, which threatened US wheat exports to Africa, both in price and quality. The American administration decided to interfere with this; it had nothing to do with a Pan Am airplane.

Does racism come into the equation as well? According to a recent report issued by the US Department of State, the majority of attacks against American interests over the last few years occurred in North and South America, and in Europe (i.e. outside the Middle East and Africa). Most were committed by non-Arab, non-Muslim individuals. The ongoing war against the region least responsible for attacking the US, is driven by the American media's idea that every Muslim, or Arab, is a possible terrorist. Don't forget either, that quite a few of these so-called terrorist groups were once sponsored and supported by American aid. The Taliban is one example of how your friend one day can be your enemy the next.

A lot of the problem lies with the US's unique definition of terrorism! It confuses between actual terrorism (we agree that the Nairobi and Dar As Salaam embassy bombings were terrorist acts) and a nation's right to self-defense and self-determination. The Palestinian revolution (including the Hamas attacks) is a good example of how motives can be confused, but it is not the only one!

Under what terrorism label does Israel's actions over the last 60 years come under? Some analysts refer to "acceptable terrorism." This particular type of terrorism is often financed by the American taxpayer! American presidents should realize that such support inevitably taints the American citizen, who is considered as a willing partner in the aggression. This explains why the US embassy was attacked in Beirut, and not the Canadian Embassy for example—Lebanon was attacked and bombed by "Israeli" planes and tanks, paid for by the American taxpayer. A strange logic, isn't it?

We all know that the reasons given by terrorists for their actions are often muddled, but this applies equally to those who fight terrorism as well. In both cases, the victims are always the innocent people.



A group of Sudanese men inspect the remains of what is believed to be a missile, 24 August, at the site of a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum. The United States attacked the plant on 20 August, saying it was involved in chemical weapons production and had links with Osama Bin Laden, accused of being behind the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Who are the real terrorists?

By John Pilger

By knowingly killing innocent people, for political ends, President Clinton is a terrorist. By supporting his action, the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary are accomplices. The dictionary meaning of terrorism allows no other interpretation; the rest is willful obfuscation, or propaganda. What matters now is our informed reaction.

We have been through this many times before, with the lies echoed predictably from Downing Street. In 1986, there was the "evil" Colonel Gaddafi, whose country President Reagan bombed from bases in Britain, killing mostly women and children, including Gaddafi's 16-month-old daughter.

In 1990, there was the "evil" General Noriega, said to be a dangerous drugs trafficker, whose capture by US Marines required a full-scale invasion of his country and the death by bombing of at least 2,000 Panamanians, mainly the poorest of the poor in their barrios. Noriega and drugs had precious little to do with it. The aim was to put Panama, its canal and its US base under direct American sovereignty, managed by other Noriegas.

In the same year, there was "the truly evil" Saddam Hussein, another one of Bush's and Reagan's old pals, whose regime they had armed and backed (along with Margaret Thatcher, who sent most of her cabinet to Baghdad as supplicants or arms salesmen). Saddam's use of American and British weapons in his attack on the "evil" multitudes in Iran in 1980 was perfectly acceptable. A million people died in that "forgotten" war; and the American and British arms industries never looked back.

Alas, Saddam, the nominal victor, then attacked the wrong country, Kuwait. He was clearly unreliable: "an upstart bastard," as one State Department brief described him more in sorrow than anger. Punishing the upstart bastard cost as many as 200,000 Iraqi lives, according to a study by the Medical Educational Trust. These were ordinary Iraqis who died during and immediately after a period of military and economic carnage whose true scale has never been appreciated outside the Middle East. This old fashioned colonial massacre

was called the Gulf war. The dead included thousands of Kurdish and Shi'a people who were Saddam's bitter opponents and whom Bush had called upon to rise up against their oppressor. Long after it was over, New York's *Newsday* revealed, from official sources, that three brigades of the US 1st Mechanised Infantry Division—"The Big Red One"—had used snowploughs mounted on tanks to bury alive Iraqi conscripts in more than 70 miles of trenches. A brigade commander said, "For all I know, we could have killed thousands."

This is a war crime. The following year, Bush attacked Somalia in what was called a "humanitarian intervention." He was in the midst of his re-election campaign. Bush said the Marines were doing "God's work, saving thousands of innocents." Like his moralising over the Gulf war, this was generally accepted by the British media, with honourable exceptions.

American television crews were waiting as the Marines landed in a beautiful African pre-dawn: "prime time" at home. From the Somali side there was perpetual darkness; "chaos" and "tribalism" and "warlords." When the American warlords had completed their adventure in Somalia and taken the media home with them, the story died, as we say. According to CIA estimates, the Marines had left between 7,000 and 10,000 Somalis dead. This was no news.

Soon after he was elected in 1992, Clinton attacked Baghdad with 23 Cruise missiles. These destroyed a residential area, killing, once again, mostly women and children, including Iraq's most distinguished artist, Leila Al Aitar.

Interviewed on his way to church with his wife, Clinton said, "I feel quite good about this, and I think the American people feel quite good about it." The pretext for the attack was an Iraqi "plot" to kill George Bush on a visit to Kuwait. There was no hard evidence and the plot story is now widely regarded as fake.

Two years ago, Clinton attacked Iraq again, this time insisting that he was "defending" Kurds against Saddam Hussein, who "must pay the price." Once again civilians—television's unpeople, I call

them—paid the price.

Earlier this year, Clinton very nearly attacked again. Virtually the same footage of missiles looking sleek against the dawn, light, courtesy of the Pentagon, appeared on British television. What stopped him?

Like spontaneous combustion, public opinion all over the world raised its voice. The cameras had also shown glimpses of Iraq's silent holocaust, the consequences of the imposition of "economic sanctions" by the United States and Britain (under the usual UN flag of convenience) against the Iraqi civilian population, notably its children.

Tony Blair said he wept for the children who were killed in Omagh by a terrorist act; but he is silent on the children who die in Iraq as a result of one of the most enduring terrorist acts of the late 20th century, conducted largely by his government and its principal ally.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization, both UN agencies, more than half a million children have died as a direct result of sanctions. Other sources put the figure at over a million. Baby food and enriched powdered milk are blockaded, along with vital hospital equipment: stethoscopes, X-ray machines, medical swabs, scanners and water-purifiers.

As for the news of Clinton's latest attack, the surreal stereotypes are back on parade: the flag burning, embassy-storming, bearded, wild men of Islam—"the enemy of the future," says Washington. Forget that not only have Muslims been responsible for a tiny proportion of deaths caused by terrorism, but in recent years it is they who have been the greatest sufferers from state terrorism. The limbs found lying in the rubble in Khartoum and Afghanistan are theirs: the terrible burns shown fleetingly on TV are theirs.

All, of course, are unpeople: the victims of an unerring pattern of ruthless, lawless terrorism, imperialist by nature and infinitely greater than that of any Islamic or Irish group. It is time to stop sniggering at the distractions of this rampant power and to recognize the truth about it and to speak out.

The Independent

Middle East Beat by Khairi Janbek Raining missiles

JUST AS the title indicates, it was literally raining missiles over Sudan and Afghanistan. The *casus belli* for the US cruise attack, is the recent terrorist action against US diplomatic representations in Africa. Just as the terrorists have picked up rather soft targets for their attacks, the USA has also responded in kind. After all, Sudan is in the midst of a devastating civil war, and Afghanistan...well, is in a rather fluid situation.

The core of the matter remains to be Osama Bin Laden, who is increasingly making Carlos the Jackal look like a harmless Easter Bunny. It is worth noting that the US, even at the time of the previous administration, alluded to the alleged presence of Bin Laden terrorist training camps in Sudan, and often spoke about his connections in Afghanistan.

But it was left to the current administration to take action. Obviously there are many difficulties, moral, political, and legal when considering the American action which doesn't seem to be bothering the USA. Some of the combatants in the Sudanese strife have actually welcomed the attack on Khartoum, while in Kabul, the Taliban forces have given clear indications that they will restrain Bin Laden's future activities.

What the USA was seeking is results. And from the recent indications, they seem to have got the results they want. Also the message is clear to other countries in the world, but only those who tend to be without much international sympathy, to be careful of their bedfellows, because terrorism tends to be the poor nations' spur weapon.

Of course, and as expected there was an uproar against the American action in the Islamic world, but most of these countries are either dependent on American goodwill for their future well-being, or are already outcasts in the eyes of the USA. It is not the vocal protests that can be worrying to the USA, but rather the possibility of a new cycle of violence which will end up consuming many victims.

No one doubts the impact of American firepower, but equally, no one doubts the effect of a zealous and committed terrorist to wreak havoc when striking. Clearly, the US aims at hitting any target that may pose as a possible base or infrastructure for terrorism, making the reluctant or volunteer host to think twice before they give refuge or support to any terrorist organization.

Sanctions do not have the deterrence value anymore but rockets do make a bigger bang. Antipathy towards the US government does not seem to raise very high in the administration's opinion, as recent history demonstrated when Mrs Albright phoned Mr Arafat after the missile attack to reflect about the state of peace in the region.

It is Islam and Muslims that we should be talking about and despite the fact that president Clinton emphatically declared that the attack was not against Islam, it is hoped that the Muslim community in the Diaspora—the USA, and the West will not suffer the prejudice that emerges in various societies in times of trouble. The actions of a small minority that interprets faith in its own way does not reflect the views of the majority of Muslims whom are raised on the benevolent and merciful words of Islam.

The question remains, whether irrationality can be fought with the same arguments of irrationality. Is it feasible that the only way to combat irrationality is by using the same methods which brought it out in the first place? It is not the freedom fighter or the terrorist definition that matters at the end of the day, but rather what can be construed as: rational, or irrational.

Business scene

■ The economic and industrial sectors last week lost one of the most prominent figures. Mustafa Darweesh Al Khalili passed away Thursday, leaving a strong record of assistance to local economic and business sectors. Well known for his patronage of the reputable industrial complex LG, Al Khalili spent about a quarter of a century introducing the latest technology to the Jordanian market.

■ So far, the number of participants in the upcoming conference of Jordanian businessmen and investors has reached 400. More than 218 are from Jordan, 26 from United Arab Emirates, 17 from Saudi Arabia, 54 from Palestine, nine from Qatar, three from Lebanon, four from Egypt, two from Yemen, six from Spain, four from Germany, seven from America, and others. The conference which is due to be held on 17 September, is the first of its kind in the Kingdom and is aimed at promoting investment in the country.

■ The Bank of Jordan has registered gross profits of JD 1.964 in the first six months of the year. Compared with just JD 405.2 thousand in the same time last year. The bank's net profits reached JD 844.2,000.

■ Arab Aluminium Co., made a profit of JD 476,000 in the first half of the year. This figure has decreased from JD 976,000 in the first half of the year last year.

■ It's a good year for the Irbid Electricity Authority. Its revenues for the first half of the year reached JD 15.3 percent. This is an increase of 6.3 percent over the same time last year.

■ The US government have transferred \$50 million to Jordan, a source at the Central Bank said. This is part of a part of an agreement signed between the US government for 1998.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 26 August

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
¥	0.4801	0.4825
₹	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
₪	0.3667	0.3685
₦	0.0419	0.0421

Transparency stressed as way for new government

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

MINISTERS FROM the newly formed government have begun to tackle the critical problems faced by the predecessors in the new and refreshing spirit of transparency. Restoring economic confidence, and financial stability is seen to be at the heart of the cabinet's new agenda.

Political analysts believe that the recent reshuffle was crucial to rebuild the shattered confidence between the nation and its government, and to ease the rising level of frustration felt by the people following the recent scandals over the misleading economic growth rate figures and the water contamination crisis.

Some observers argue that although the burdens faced by the new government are grave, every effort needs to be made to bridge the gap between the government and its people.

"His Majesty King Hussein's designation letter focused on internal concerns, calling for immediate solutions to all the nation's problems, such as unemployment and poverty, as well as the revival of the economy and the enhancement of investment in the Kingdom," said Mr Ibrahim Izzudin, a prominent political expert.

The designation letter called for a comprehensive national plan to eradicate poverty and reduce the level of unemployment, the latter being one of the most serious ailments fac-

ing the Kingdom. Past official figures have said that 23 percent of the labor force is out of work, which contradicted with the study of Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies that puts the figure closer to 27 percent.

The quality of the information supplied by the former government contributed greatly to its fall, as figures released on the economic growth rates and unemployment levels were both disputed, leading to a loss of credibility. Confusing and scarce details following the water crisis further magnified these feelings. Highlighting this problem, His Majesty King Hussein's letter of designation called on the new government to produce honest, objective and transparent official statistics.

Some analysts say that the new government is full of "economic heavyweights," with at least 10 ministers having a solid economic background.

Prominent economic analyst, Ahmad Al Nammari, however, argued that both governments belong to the same "economic school." "They both adopt what is called the market economy, which focuses on making partnership agreements with Europe and the World Trade Organization, following the trend of globalization," the analyst added.

Al Nammari added that "the equation between normalizing



New government

the relationship with Israel, at the expense of inter-Arab relations, will have very little effect on the overall globalization trend."

Mr Al Nammari concluded by stressing "the need to reinforce the principle of accountability and responsibility, and the need to end nepotism, favoritism and corruption in all sectors of government. What we want is a government that adopts a political and economic plan for the nation, to try and achieve sustainable and balanced development. Also, Pan-

Arab coordination is a must."

Meanwhile, another economic expert, Dr Fahad Al Fanek, known for his pro-government stance, welcomed the newly appointed government saying that, "the most important qualification of Dr Tarawneh is that he is new. A lot of the problems faced by his predecessor have since either been tackled or have gone away. Thus, the prime minister will be starting on a level playing field."

He continued saying, "we don't expect miracles from the

new government because it doesn't have a magic wand, but we do hope that should it face a crisis in the future, it will respond in a quick and transparent manner."

Dr Al Fanek concluded by saying that, "the challenges faced by this government are great, so our expectations are modest. I don't know whether I should congratulate them on their appointment, or to sympathize with them, because of the responsibilities they now have to bear."

Business Chronicle

Tough tasks await newly formed cabinet

FEW DAYS have passed since the new government was formed, but the public, though longing for a change, any change, seem less than enthusiastic about the reshuffle. Meanwhile, people are still keen to utter words of congratulation to the ministers, but are unwilling to speak their mind openly. Others are simply indifferent, believing that the change is merely one of faces and that the same strategies will continue unless the veteran minister come up with revolutionary measures to improve the government's image in the eyes of the people.

Jordanians are now asking whether the government will successfully lead the country into a new prosperous era or will the people only be left with their illusions as was the case with former governments?

The ministers are asked to do their utmost to correct the errors of the former government's economic team and to put their house in order by introducing substantial changes to their public institutions. Some observers are already describing Fayez Tarawneh's government as an "economic government." The designation letter sent from His Majesty King Hussein to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan focused on economic issues. In addition it is noticeable that about half of the ministers have economic qualifications and have considerable experience in this field. Prime Minister Tarawneh himself is a veteran economic figure who, it is hoped, will lead the team's efforts to bridge the gap between the government and people, especially after the growth rate figures fiasco and the controversial water crisis.

The new government is going to face countless challenges—drastically increasing poverty, unemployment, combined with administrative sluggishness and nepotism in public institutions are the tip of the iceberg. They must also tackle the privatization issue and liberalize the market to gain membership to the World Trade Organization.

The most urgent challenge, however, is to redeem the government's credibility with the people by becoming more transparent.

The government is facing tough tasks. Only time will tell whether these new faces are capable and, more importantly, whether they are truly committed to solving the nation's ills.

British Airways goes direct to Denver

BRITISH AIRWAYS announced it will start operating daily flights between London and Denver on September 1st, with a 194.38 return fare of £299, including £45 taxes.

The new service, cutting some three and a half hours off the journey to the Colorado city, was originally scheduled to begin at the start of this summer but postponed because of delays in receiving the necessary US government approvals. It will now take off in time for the Rockies ski season.

Peter Spencer, the airline's Director for the Americas said, "We are delighted that we are finally taking to the runway for the take-off of our new service to Denver. I am completely confident that this is going to become one of the most popular US holiday spots among Britons in both the winter and summer, and great for UK business travelers. The delay has been unfortunate, but it does mean we have had more time

to put our people and plans in place and to ensure the most successful launch of this service."

"We have been receiving great support from the people of Denver in preparing for our new flights—they are very much looking forward to the day when the British are coming."

Denver is the biggest US city not currently served by a direct London flight, and attracts more British visitors than any other US city without a direct flight to the UK. Gateway to the Rocky Mountains and its sky resorts and National Parks, it is a business and leisure destination in its own right. Colorado is the most popular ski area in the USA.

British Airways Holidays is offering a range of skiing holidays in the Rockies this winter, using the new Denver services, with prices starting at £599 for seven nights in Vail.

Floods take an economic toll

By Maggie Farley and Henry Chu

SHANGHAI—The catastrophic floods that are sweeping away Chinese farms and factories and threatening major cities also may wash away some of the country's much-needed economic growth, financial experts say.

The Yangtze and Yellow rivers that cut through the heart of the country overflow so often, with such sudden destruction, that the Yellow is known as "China's Sorrow." This year, waterways in the industrial northeast are breaking their banks as well, increasing the potential devastation and economic disruption at a time when China can ill afford it.

This summer's floods have claimed thousands of lives, left millions homeless and caused an estimated \$24 billion worth of damage so far, the government reports. The floods are concentrated in just a handful of provinces, but when railways are swept away, workers diverted from factory lines to man the flood's front lines and harvests destroyed, the effects trickle throughout the country in small but significant ways.

One of the biggest worries in Beijing is how the floods might drag down an already slowing economy, and whether the combination of newly homeless and burgeoning jobless could lead to social unrest.

The government has staked its credibility on achieving 8 percent growth this year to create new work for those thrown out of their jobs under China's market reforms. But reaching that target is unlikely, economists say.

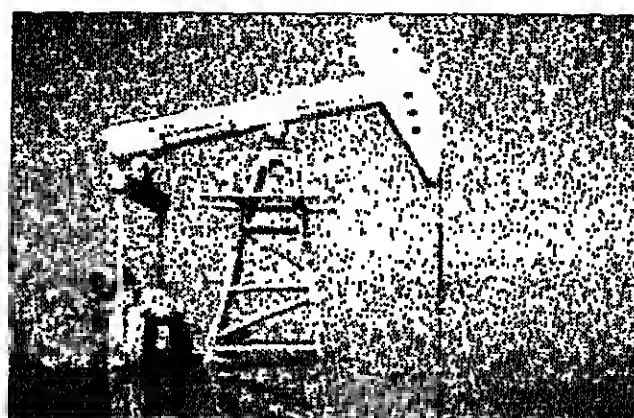
"The floods could reduce GDP by about 1 percentage point," said Andy Xie, a China specialist at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter in Hong Kong, citing the damaged grain harvests and industrial interruption as the largest factors. That means pro-

jected output may fall short by about \$7.7 billion this year.

"The floods are the most visible, but not the most important, reason behind China's economic slowdown," Xie said. The Asian economic turmoil has dried up a significant source of foreign direct investment and hit China's exports hard. But the biggest problems come from economic mismanagement at home, resulting in stockpiles of unsold goods and deflation, Xie said.

Analysts searching for a silver lining say that wide-scale reconstruction after the waters recede actually might boost the economy. "From the macroeconomic point of view, the floods may lift domestic demand. The reconstruction of flooded areas, restoration of agricultural and industrial production and house building will be new stimuli," Wang Guoxing, an associate professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, told the Financial Times. The government has pledged to increase infrastructure spending, particularly in flood-control projects, to stimulate the economy in the second half of the year.

But post-flood repair and environmental protection are different from the type of big payoff infrastructure spending needed to kick-start growth, Xie said. If there is any good economic news to be wrung from the disaster, it is that the flood damage to crops and factories may help shore up falling prices



Production facilities at the Daqing oilfield in northeastern Heilongjiang province have been flooded by waters from the Nen River 22 August. Floods have reduced the daily output of China's Daqing oilfield by 2.1 percent. Current daily oil output at China's largest field is more than 150,000 tonnes against normal output of 153,240 tonnes. Daqing had reopened more than 200 wells, leaving 282 still closed and another 1,443 inundated but still operating. Daqing has more than 25,000 oil wells.

caused by oversupply, he said.

The economic damage wrought by the floods, combined with Asia's economic crisis, also might help minimize political fallout for not achieving growth targets: Natural disasters and external economic crises are not the government's fault, Beijing has enjoyed international praise for keeping its currency stable while its neighbors offer cheaper exports after devaluation. At home, the floods have become a rallying

point to bring together the nation—and distract people from their own problems.

An area of farmland roughly half the size of California is under water, affecting cotton, wheat and rice crops but, significantly, not the autumn grain harvest, which accounts for 75 percent of total grain production. Earlier this week, cotton futures soared on the New York Stock Exchange after early reports that 1.5 million to 2.5 million bales had been

destroyed. China supplies nearly a quarter of the world's cotton.

At the Daqing oil fields in northeastern China, where more than one-third of the country's oil is produced, about 2,500 of the 20,000 oil wells have been inundated, the necks of the pumps dipping in and out of the overflow like dinosaurs lapping at a water hole.

Nearly 1 million soldiers are deployed along riverbanks across the nation, but the nightly news also lauds everyday heroes in their fight against the floods. Recent reports praised one man, Chen Niangen, who drowned while trying to protect a preserve for rare white-finned dolphins; another show featured an elderly man who had worked hours to help build a dike to protect his village, squeezing his eyes shut when the dike was destroyed so he wouldn't have to witness waters inundate his hometown.

But the real enemy is not so much Mother Nature as human nature, environmentalists say. Every year, the rivers flood when Himalayan snows melt and summer rains come. But intensive logging in western China has eliminated the stabilizing network of roots that once kept silt from sweeping down the river and filling up lakes and reservoirs, leaving less room for runoff water.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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Al-Nir Insurance 5.14 5.15 6.67	Commercial Industry 5.31 5.26 5.17	Jordan Kuwait Bank 5.16 5.70 2.94	National Steel 5.66 5.88 4.00
General Price Pointer: 167.430	169.590	172.220	174.630
Trade Volume: 700.664	128.9190	897.838	1068477
Stock Volume: 569966	889927	569916	540029
Highest Traded Stocks			
Al-Ahli Bank: 140975	Tourism Hotels: 289.188	Dac Address: 131.084	Arab Bank: 433.725

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Suspected terrorist apparently led double life

LA Times-Washington Post

From debt to desperation in Japan

By Sandra Sugawara

TOKYO—Early Thursday, Nobuo Shibata, the 48-year-old president of a small sheet metal company, was found slumped in his car next to his brother. A hose attached to the tailpipe had sent deadly exhaust fumes wafting into the car.

A suicide note found in Shibata's pocket said, "We apologize to all our employees for the slump in our business."

As debate drags on in Japan's parliament about the best way to pull the country out of its recession, the evidence of Japan's dramatic decline appears daily. Struggles such as Shibata's are reflected throughout the Japanese economy as bankruptcies and suicides rise, and as increasing numbers of people who cannot repay loans go into hiding to avoid the stigma of bankruptcy.

Corporate failures surged 35.7 percent in July from a year earlier, to 1,710 cases, and are expected to continue rising, according to Teikoku Databank, a private research group. Personal bankruptcies, which hit 70,000 last year, are expected to top 100,000 this year, according to bankruptcy attorneys. They also estimate that about 100,000 debtors are in hiding.

In 1997, about 3,600 Japanese killed themselves over economic problems, according to the National Police Agency.

Hideo Yamada, a leading bankruptcy attorney, said an estimated 1.5 million people are now unable to repay loans and are struggling to avoid bankruptcy. Some turn to relatives or loan sharks, who often have ties to organized crime groups, for cash, in hopes that their finances will improve and they can repay the money soon, he said.

But with the economy sliding further, many of them may have difficulty doing that. Indeed, earlier this week Economic Planning Agency Minister Tetsuo Katayama said the government's assessment of Japan's economic condition might worsen after the release of July economic data.

"In just about all the regions, the economy has become worse," Katayama said, according to Reuters News Service.

And Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa acknowledged that the bailout of major banks earlier this year did nothing to alleviate the credit crunch, which is making it even harder for companies to get the loans they need to do business. That is expected to accelerate the rate of bankruptcy filings.

The Japanese Trade Union Confederation of labor unions, is so concerned about the impact the credit crunch will have on jobs that it recently decided to funnel 20 percent of its strike fund to guarantee loans taken out by companies that employ union members, according to Kyodo News Service.

In the United States, bankruptcy is sometimes seen as a form of creative destruction. Many American entrepreneurs blithely recite the failed business ventures that preceded their successes. Not so in Japan. "To have to borrow, there is a sense of shame. And once you borrow, there is a widespread feeling that you must return," said bankruptcy attorney Kenji Usunomiya.

In fact, companies often try to get rid of employees who have declared personal bankruptcy, said bankruptcy attorney Hideo Yamada. The companies fear such people will sully the firm's reputation, he said. "Legally they can't fire a person because of bankruptcy. But if he gets calls from credit companies at work, then they can use that as an excuse to get rid of him," arguing that it is disrupting work, Yamada said.

So instead of filing for bankruptcy, many people pack up their belongings in the middle of the night and move to another part of Japan. People from cities move to the countryside, where they try to get work as day laborers, while people in the rural areas try to disappear in the cities as waiters or janitors, according to attorneys. Some eventually get caught, particularly if they get sick and must apply for national health insurance, or if they need to enroll their children in school. Others become weary of being away from their family and friends and return to file for bankruptcy and face their creditors.

"I hear that those small construction company owners, some of them have run away because they have so little work, but they still must pay their employees," said Kazuharu Ezawa, an executive with the Construction and General Workers Union.

One former owner of a sporting goods store in Shikoku, a small island south of Tokyo, ran away when he realized his store had failed. In a recent interview, he explained that he was afraid of loan sharks. In addition, he said, "I was scared of being labeled a bankrupt person."

He changed his mind after his daughter, whom he had contacted, convinced him to go to a lawyer. Since then he has successfully discharged his debts through the courts and is a taxicab driver. He wrote a book on the ordeal, because he said he wanted to convince others that it was far better to use the bankruptcy courts than to disappear.

However, he used a pseudonym on the book and refused to allow his real name to be used in this story.

"I don't want my neighbors to know I was once bankrupt," he said.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Conflict escalates in Congo

By Lynne Duke

KINSHASA, Congo—As a planned peace summit fizzled, the Congo conflict escalated into full-blown regional war Saturday with Angolan and Zimbabwese troops, backed by planes and tanks, reportedly fighting with President Laurent Kabila's forces to defeat Rwandan-backed rebels trying to oust him.

Rebels of the Congolese Democratic Coalition claimed this afternoon they were only 20 miles from this tense capital city, and a rebel commander, Dioudonne Kabengele, said: "We are preparing for a big showdown in the capital itself."

Kinshasa's capture could set in motion a domino effect of de facto partition in Africa's third-largest nation and destabilize the region. Diplomats say hundreds of Zimbabwese troops, backed by planes, are stationed in and around the city to bolster Kabila's poorly equipped army, but the rebels have proved themselves wily and bold in their three-week campaign.

About 40 miles southwest of Kinshasa at the town of Sona Bata, a Reuters news agency correspondent saw two MIG-21 fighters jet bombing rebel positions today and facing anti-aircraft fire in return. Rebels called the jets Zimbabwese and claimed they shot them down. Zimbabwe denied both claims.

Further southwest, rebel forces also claimed they had fought with a column of Angolan troops and tanks that had pressed into Congo's Atlantic coastal region from the Angolan oil enclave of Cabinda.

In a ratcheting up of regional tensions, Uganda warned Saturday that it may intervene in response to Angola and Zimbabwe's involvement.

Amid all this continental saber rattling, a South African effort to broker a cease-fire appeared to sputter. Kabila and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe spurned the summit hosted today in Pretoria by President Nelson Mandela. Only the presidents of Rwanda and Uganda, Pasteur Bizimungu and Yoweri Museveni, attended. Kabila, who remained ensconced tonight in the southern city of Lubumbashi, believes there is no need



to talk as long as Rwandan troops remain in his country, sources close to him say. Rwanda and Uganda helped put Kabila in power 15 months ago. Their moves against him represent the spectacular unraveling of a regional coalition, as well as the crash of the hopes that greeted Kabila's rise to power when he and his allies defeated Mobutu Sese Seko, the late dictator of this country once called Zaire.

Kabila's rule over this vast and fractured country has been deeply criticized. Despite some economic reforms and enhanced personal security for residents, Kabila's reign has been marred by his ban on political parties, his jailing of opponents and his government's suspicious attitude toward foreign investment. And Congo has been sidelined internationally, with little foreign

aid coming in, because of Kabila's refusal to allow a United Nations team to investigate massacres allegedly committed by his and Rwandan forces during their campaign against Mobutu.

None of Kabila's many fallings out have been more dramatic than the recent one with Uganda and Rwanda. So close were they that Rwandan officers once led Kabila's army, and Uganda offered its guidance as the senior coalition member. But the alliance collapsed over border security issues and disputes about the balance of regional power among them. Both countries refused in May to attend a regional summit on peace and security; nor did they attend the anniversary celebrations that same month marking Kabila's first year in power.

The rebellion began on 2 August when ethnic Tutsis in the Congolese army mutinied against Kabila. It was launched in the country's far east, but quickly moved by air to the far west when rebels hijacked several airplanes to ferry troops. The Tutsi coalition, representing a small regional minority, soon was joined by other political and military factions. Rwanda denies this role, which diplomats say is indisputable. But like Uganda, Rwanda also has threatened to publicly join the fight.

Though regional and foreign hopes were high that a cease-fire could be brokered in South Africa, Kabila is in no mood to negotiate and his cabinet advised him against it, sources here say.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Ancient tradition at Turkish monastery comes under siege

By Amberin Zaman

MIDYAT, Turkey—Tucked amid rugged mountains where Kurdish separatists are fighting the Turkish army, the ancient Syrian Orthodox monastery here usually draws only a trickle of intrepid Christian pilgrims. But lately, a new kind of visitor is turning up.

These days, Turkish secret police and government inspectors arrive several times a month. They are trying to stamp out a 1,600-year-old tradition at Mor Gabriel, the world's oldest functioning monastery, of teaching children the Syrian Orthodox faith and the Aramaic language.

"Should the authorities pursue this ban," said Timoteus Samuel Akkas, the archbishop responsible for the monastery, "we won't be able to train new priests."

Clutching a heavy silver crucifix encrusted with purple stones, Akkas added, "I'll die before I allow that to happen."

Founded in A.D. 397, Mor Gabriel is the spiritual home of the estimated 3 million Syrian Orthodox Christians scattered across the world. Until the 12th century, Christian families sent their first-born sons here to train as monks, priests or teachers. Then Turkey came under Islamic rule, and the monastery, a target of frequent Muslim raids, fell into disuse and became a cowshed for Kurdish farmers.

Turkey's 20,000-member Syrian Orthodox community was allowed to revive Mor Gabriel in the 1920s after the birth of the modern Turkish republic. But under the republic's secularist rules, Mor Gabriel's monks were legally barred from teaching their religion and their language, which is believed to have been spoken by Jesus.

In practice, however, for decades, authorities looked the other way as Christian boys came for evening lessons at the monastery after attending state schools during the day.

That official tolerance ended late last year with the first of a series of demands to stop the lessons.

Asked about the crackdown, government officials say they are simply enforcing a law barring any form of education that is not regulated by the state. They will not explain why they decided only recently to enforce the ban.

Many Christians say they believe that the decision was made by Islamic zealots who remained in the bureaucracy here in Mardin province after Turkey's Islamist-led government resigned in June 1997. They say the Islamists view the Syrian Orthodox monks as rivals who convert Muslims to their own faith.

John Shamook, the assistant U.S. secretary of State for human rights, told reporters in February that the Islamist provincial governor, Filaret Gavril, assured him that the pressure on Mor Gabriel would end.

It has not. The governor's office has since ordered all restoration work at the monastery stopped.

Akkas says inspectors have filmed and measured practically every square inch of the sand-colored complex and have returned to make sure nothing has changed.

The religious and language instruction continues but is interrupted whenever the monks spot a government vehicle climbing the hill. Provincial authorities have threatened legal action unless the archbishop sends home the 30 pupils who board here.

An exotic figure in his flowing scarlet habit and embroidered black skullcap with earflaps, Akkas points to newly restored Byzantine mosaics speckling the ceiling of a small chapel where he had just said Mass.

"We thought they would applaud our efforts to preserve a treasure that belongs to all Turks," he said. "Instead, they told us we were breaking the law."

The monastery is also hit by a law allowing only Turkish citizens to serve as priests. Immigration to Europe and the United States in recent decades, Akkas said, has reduced the region's Syrian Orthodox

population from 50,000 to fewer than 3,000. With only eight priests left, he said, he is facing a "serious personnel problem."

The exodus has picked up because of fighting between the army and Kurdish guerrillas, who are Muslim.

Residents of Haberli, a small Christian village 12 miles from the monastery, said they feel pressure from both sides to join the conflict. Visitors must register at a military checkpoint before entering the village, which is guarded by a tank.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Archives illuminate Prague Spring

By Peter Finn

PRAGUE, Czech Republic—Two comrades were on the phone, with the KGB recording every word, and one of them, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was steamed.

The Prague Spring of 1968 was in full bloom, and in the new openness, someone in the Czech media had dared to call Brezhnev a "Stalinist."

Even general secretaries have feelings. "And what, I might ask, do you say about this?" Brezhnev fumed at Alexander Dubcek, first secretary of the Czech Communist Party.

Dubcek, according to the transcript, fell silent.

Since the collapse of communist rule in 1989, a trove of historical documents gradually has emerged from the secret archives of the Soviet Union and its onetime allies in central and Eastern Europe. To mark the anniversary of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia—launched 30 years ago Thursday—a selection of documents relating to the Prague Spring democratic reform movement and its destruction have been collected and translated into English, many for the first time.



Prague

"Our knowledge is deepening and extending," said Jaromir Navratil, 72, chief editor of the collection, which is being published in the United States by the Central European University Press and the private, Washington-based

National Security Archive. The papers surfaced through the Czechoslovak Government Commission for Analysis of the Events of 1967-70, which was created in 1989 to hunt down documents across Europe.

In all, 140 key documents, culled from 140,000, are being published this month, and they include, besides transcripts of phone calls made by Brezhnev to Dubcek, memoirs, minutes of meetings, cables, private letters and transcripts of discussions among figures on both sides of the Cold War. They have never been published in general readership form in the Czech Republic.

But as understanding of the events of 1968 is enriched by the archival digging of historians such as Navratil, there is a curious phenomenon at work in the city where it all happened. The 30th anniversary of the Prague Spring, when a reformist Communist leadership ushered in economic liberalization, allowed free speech and raised the possibility, at least, of democracy, is being greeted mostly with a shrug.

There is a three-part series on Czech television, there are a few photo exhibitions around town, and Friday there will be a memorial Mass and a commemoration of those who were killed by the invading armies of the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Hungary. But few Czechs are stopping to dwell on the past. "How does it matter to me?" said Ivan Sabacky, a student.

The Czech polling agency Rendula this week asked 1,421 teenagers, aged 14 to 18, what the words "August 1968" meant to them, and 43 percent said "nothing." One in four did not even know that anything significant had happened.

The ignorance of the young also finds a reflection in the

apathy of their elders. For some observers, the widespread indifference simply masks ideological divisions in Czech society and an unwillingness to confront the Communist past, before and after August 1968.

"Some people think 1968, the Prague Spring, wasn't anything deeper than a fight inside the Communist Party, so why care about it," said Jaroslav Veis, former editor of the political weekly Tyden and now an adviser to Czech Senate leader Petr Pithart.

"Any good or positive memory of the Communist Party today is unpopular," said Karel Srp, a former dissident who is staging a public exhibition on 1968 in a Prague park. "Even though it's been nine years since the revolution, it is still too early for people to digest their history."

Jan Urban, publisher of the Prague-based monthly Transitions, said that people are not so much avoiding the memory of the Prague Spring but the aftermath of the invasion, when Czech society not only acquiesced to the most oppressive and sterile form of communism but also replenished the purged ranks of the Communist Party.

"You can be defeated and maintain honor and societal ties, but nothing like that was preserved here," Urban said. "Humiliation prevents us from looking back. Why after '68, why after the purges when everything was clear to everybody, why after three years, was the party able to get its membership back? Everyone is a newly born anti-Communist today, so who wants to remember support for communism?"

There are few documents more engaging than the transcripts of Brezhnev snorting and talking. In the lead-up to the invasion, the Soviet leader spent up to seven or eight hours a day jawing on the phone with other Warsaw Pact leaders, especially Dubcek. For more than an hour at one point, Brezhnev, alternately bullying and cajoling, tried to get Dubcek to crack down on the freedom in the streets and purge the reformers from the party ranks.

"You're deceiving us," Brezhnev said repeatedly. And then, calming, he attempted another tack: "Sasha," said Brezhnev, using an affectionate diminutive of Alexander, "I understand that you're nervous; I understand that this situation is very complex for you. But don't you see that I'm talking to you as a friend and that I wish only the best for you."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

See the car, know the driver

John O'Dell investigates the current trend for car customizing

LOS ANGELES—From chopped-and-channelled '32 Ford hot rods to fender-flared Honda Civics with \$500-a-copy wheels and computer-generated graphics decorating their flanks, Southern California highways are becoming a showcase for the United States' fast-growing car-customizing craze.

Turning cars and trucks into personalized vehicles that go beyond what the factory dreamed up has been a passion here since the first speed demons pulled the fenders off their 1920s flivvers and lowered them to achieve more aerodynamic shapes in their quest for a few more miles an hour.

The pursuit for personality in vehicles has grown from a backyard hobby dependent on self-taught skills and homemade parts into a \$19.3 billion-a-year industry. In just four years, between 1993 and 1997, spending on improving the appearance and performance of cars and trucks grew 34 percent.

And all along the way, Southern California has set the trends. The hot rod, the full-custom "lead sleds" of the 1940s and '50s, and the lowrider all came out of back yards and back-alley garages around Los Angeles.

Perhaps the biggest change in car customizing in the last decade has been its gradual switch from a largely do-it-yourself hobby into a major do-it-for-me business, says Jim Spoonhower, chief statistician for

the Specialty Equipment Market Association, the automotive aftermarket industry's trade group. Only about 20 percent of the parts and services sold to owners after they buy their vehicles—the so-called aftermarket—is sold to do-it-yourselfers, Spoonhower says.

The other big change is that while it is still a largely male hobby, customizing is seeing more and more women in the driver's seats. That's largely because the two newest trends involve vehicles—import sedans and sport-utility vehicles—that appeal to women.

"It's the late 20th century, and girls are going against male chauvinism," says Edward Eng, an editor at Illustrated Graphic Communications Inc., a Huntington Beach, Calif., publisher whose magazines chronicle both the import-auto and sport-utility scenes. The goal of the new era of customizer is to achieve a base vehicle that is superclean, "like a factory car, only a lot better," Eng says.

Outrageously altered metalwork is out, as are big chromed bumpers and huge hood scoops. Instead, the modern customizer smooths out the body and then embellishes it with either a wing, a spoiler, a high-performance engine, improved suspension, fancy wheels and tires, or a paint-and-graphics scheme to make it unique.

Most customizers also pay tremendous attention to the interiors of their vehicles,



Roy Schmidt works on reshaping a front fender for a 1940 Hollywood Graham at So-Cal Speed in Pomona, Calif. The shop is a mecca for hot rodders and custom car enthusiasts. Photo by Gina Ferazzi.

often spending thousands of dollars on custom stereos and upholstery jobs. "Sport-ute" enthusiasts often take it to the extreme, installing satellite navigation systems and integrated electronic entertainment packages that include super stereos, computer game systems and television-VCR units with monitors installed in the headrests of each seat.

About 40 percent of all the money spent on customizing last year was spent on automotive sound and entertainment systems, Spoonhower says. But customizing—"personalizing" is perhaps a better way to describe the phenomenon—isn't just about Hondas and Expeditions. Just look at any well-stocked magazine rack—there are scores of periodicals devoted to vehicles of all types and how to make them look better and run better.

Among other things, they show the tremendous breadth of the customizing culture, which these days cuts across age, gender and ethnic lines. Enthusiasts are buying elaborately painted vintage Chevrolet lowrider cars, built by custom shops in Los Angeles and Orange County, and shipping them across the Pacific to their homes in Japan.

Latinos, though still deeply involved in the lowrider culture, are discovering imports. Elaborately lowered Hondas and Volkswagens, some equipped with the same hydraulic systems that make conventional lowriders hop and bob, are turning up with regularity at competitive lowrider car shows.

And women, while still most active in the import and SUV arenas, are building and driving hot rods and muscle cars. "Everyone wants to feel distinctive, and the car is just a great tool to create an individual image," says Howard Becker of Becker Automotive Design in Los Angeles. That search for individuality is the underpinning of the entire car-personalizing industry.

Customizing can be as basic as adorning a vehicle with a message-bearing bumper sticker or sticking a clown head on the radio antenna. The car owner is making a statement and using the motorcar as the medium. It goes from there all the way to

the old-fashioned definition: building a unique car, a one-of-a-kind body and interior constructed from scratch.

In most cases today, though, customizing connotes making a change that, by its nature, puts the owner's personal stamp on the vehicle.

"I just think that what you drive says a lot about you, so you want it to look nice and to be something special," says Tammy Agajanian. The Huntington Beach resident drives a mildly custom sport-utility vehicle that she bought and designed in 1994. Besides swapping the stock cloth interior for custom leather upholstery, she had all of the trim, body moldings and manufacturer's name badges removed—a process called shaving the body—so it would have a clean, sleek look.

The reasons cars have become canvases are as simple—and as complex—as sex appeal, the drive for status and the search for meaning in our lives.

"The car is a good starting place for showing the world that you are on your way up," says Will Miller, an Indiana psychologist who recently conducted a national survey of car owners for software giant Microsoft Corp.'s Internet auto shopping service.

"It's status. It's, 'Look at me!'" says John Butler, sales director at Steve Miller Sportparts Inc. in Costa Mesa, a major car and sport-utility vehicle customizer and performance tuner.

It's also about sex appeal, attracting others by showing off one's physical prowess or beauty, says Marshall Fishwick, an American studies professor at the University of Virginia whose courses include a section on car culture. He claims as a former student author Tom Wolfe, whose 1965 book, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," helped popularize the custom-car culture.

larize the custom-car culture.

"Customizing used to be pretty gender-specific," Fishwick says. "It was the male's business. And some of the accoutrements on custom cars are pretty macho."

But now, both men and women embellish their cars with custom paint, wheels and body modifications to strut their stuff, Fishwick says. And the custom movement is not fading away. A stroll through a roadster or hot-rod show might argue otherwise because of the preponderance of aging baby boom males who participate in that particular arena.

But Dan Fink, whose DF Metalworks in Huntington Beach builds classic roadster hot rods for mostly well-heeled businessmen, says he also sees growing interest by younger car owners in the art of car customizing. The reason is the fast-growing import performance segment of the market, fueled—as was the custom movement of the 1940s—by relatively low-cost cars that young drivers can work on themselves. Where many of the modifications they make are performance-oriented, appearance is equally important, and most owners are spending thousands of dollars on parts and equipment to improve the looks of their cars. The cars are usually Asian imports, with the Honda Civic leading the pack.

"It's been 43 years, since Chevrolet brought out the 1955 Bel Air, since we've had a platform like this," says Pete Chapouris, whose So-Cal Speed Shop in Pomona is a mecca for hot rodders and custom car enthusiasts alike.

"We're excited about it. It's bringing out a whole new crop of enthusiasts."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

FBI, Interpol hope to catch art thieves in a World Wide Web

By Michael James

THE FBI and Interpol have taken an interest in art. In coming months, their Web sites will feature hundreds of pictures of the world's greatest masterpieces—from Degas to Rembrandt to Van Gogh.

And they are all stolen. Interpol calls the new program "Les Oeuvres d'Art Les Plus Recherchées"—the Most Wanted Works of Art. Its aim is to use the global reach of the Internet to track down missing paintings, sculptures, etchings, tapestries and any other priceless object that have disappeared into the shadowy world of international art thievery.

"Our key focus is to get the word out that a piece has been stolen," said Lynne Richardson, an FBI program analyst who coordinates the bureau's National Stolen Art File. "The Internet is going to change the way we do that."

An estimated \$3 billion worth of stolen art works are unaccounted for around the world, according to authorities with the Art Loss Register, a London-based company that keeps a database of more than 100,000 missing pieces.

Thieves have stolen 121 works by Rembrandt, 250 by Chagall, 180 by Dali and 115 by Renoir, according to the register, which is used by police agencies worldwide for clues in art cases. The database is compiled by a private firm funded by art dealers and insurance companies.

The "hottest" works of art often are shipped to other countries for sale, requiring international policing efforts to get them back. The Internet gives authorities the ability to cross borders electronically and put out the word.

Richardson, a former museum registrar at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello homestead who the FBI hired to guide its art-tracking efforts, started posting

pictures of missing art work on the Web in June. She is working closely with Interpol, the international police agency based in France, which also is preparing a Web site containing dozens of notorious art crimes.

"It will be broken down by category, so that if you click on 'sculptures,' you'll see all types of missing sculptures that were stolen," said Interpol Senior Analyst Angela M. Meadows. "The hope is that someone here or in another country may come across the item and recognize it from the picture."

It's doubtful that Picasso envisioned today's computer age and the way that the Internet pervades so much of everyday life. But if he were alive today, he would be able to search for stolen masterpieces—including his own. Authorities estimate there are more than 350 stolen Picassos missing throughout the world. Many are lesser works, including etchings the size of a slide of film, but 88 of them are paintings, said Anna Kislik, director of the Art Loss Register office in New York.

Some Picasso pictures will be posted on either the FBI or Interpol Web sites, which are in their fledgling stages. But the two law enforcement agencies have high hopes that the sites will eventually make a dent in the business of art thieves.

The criminals and their crimes are diverse, running the gamut from smash-and-grab robbers in Florida truck stops to heavily-armed masked bandits looting European museums.

One of the first cases to be put on the FBI Web page is the biggest art heist in history—a robbery at the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum in Boston on March 18, 1990. Two men dressed as Boston police officers tied up museum guards and hauled off 11 masterpieces worth about \$300 million. Among the works taken were Vermeer's "The Concert,"

Rembrandt's "Storm on the Sea of Galilee" and Degas' "Program for an Artistic Soiree." None have been recovered and the intruders, both wearing false black mustaches, have not been arrested.

"All logical leads have been followed through with no positive investigative results," said the FBI Web page entry, which advertises a \$5 million reward for recovery of the works. Each of the stolen paintings can be viewed with a click of a mouse.

Officials familiar with art crime are quick to point out, however, that the bulk of the thefts involve criminals who lack style and sophistication—to put it mildly.

In London, for instance, a petty thief named Russell Grant-McVicar walked into the Lefevre Galleries in March 1997 and asked an employee if a particular painting was a Picasso. When he found it was, he threatened the employee with a sawed-off shotgun, grabbed the painting and ran out to a waiting taxicab.

The painting was the "Tete de Femme," valued at roughly \$1 million. It was recovered and Grant-McVicar was arrested after he left an important clue behind in the cab—the painting's frame, covered with his fingerprints.

"Most of them are not the Cary Grant 'To Catch a Thief' types," said the FBI's Richardson. "Most of the thefts are lower level. Very often, the thief may not even know what they have or how valuable it is."

That fact caused some debate about whether the pictures and descriptions of the paintings should be included on the Web sites. Art industry and insurance companies have sided away from publicizing details of the thefts.

"Many times the thief knows that art and antiques have value, but that's all," said Kislik of the Art Loss Register. "One concern is that we don't want to help them understand what they've got."

But recent thinking is that the pluses of putting the pictures on the Web are likely to outweigh any negatives, said the Art Loss Register's marketing director, David J. Shillingford.

"These items will start off in the underworld and every time they change hands, they come one step closer to the legitimate market," Shillingford said. "Each step along the way is another chance for somebody to recognize the item. Pictures on a Web site can increase people's awareness of what to buy and not to buy."

Stolen art often finds its way back into the public domain, although it sometimes takes decades. Edouard Manet's 1880 painting "Peaches" was recently recovered 20 years after being stolen in New York City. A Florida art dealer had contacted the Art Loss Register about the painting, worth well over \$200,000, after it had been offered to him for sale. The FBI is still looking for the thief.

Some of the biggest thefts, which seem to have involved extensive planning, seem to offer less hope. In July 1994, armed men hid in a museum in Frankfurt, Germany, until closing, then tied up the guards and stole \$40 million worth of paintings by English master J.M.W. Turner.

The likelihood of such hugely expensive and well-known paintings turning up at an auction or a dealer's shop is practically nil. So the question becomes, why take them? What could be done with them? What private collector would spend so much money on a painting that he could never show to anyone?

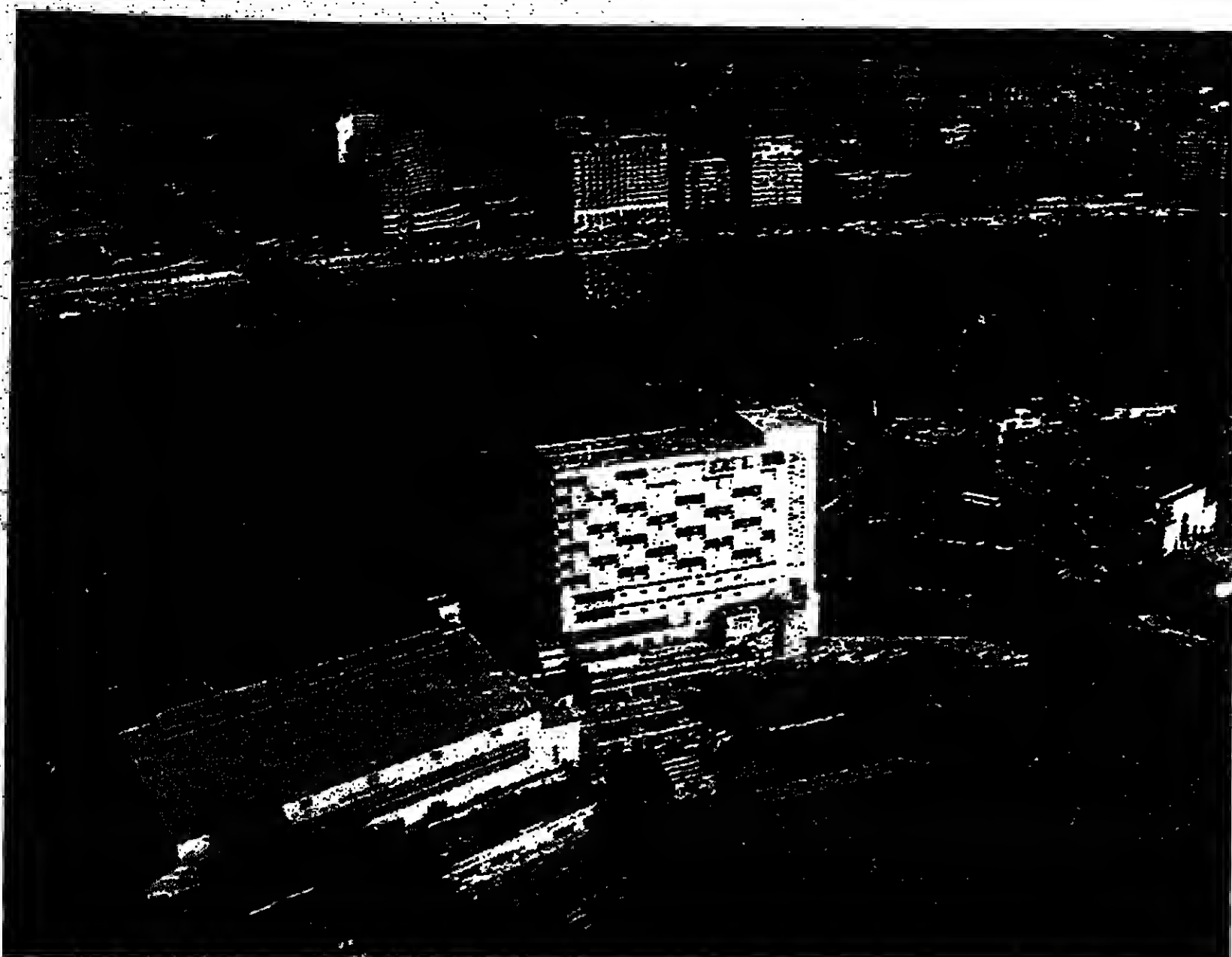
"It's only the thieves who are caught that you know anything about," Kislik said. "The ones who get away with it, you never get to know."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



The FBI hope to catch art thieves through the Internet. It is hoped the Web site will also act as a deterrent to thieves.

Egypt — From now to eternity



An overview of Egypt.

By David Garson

THERE IS no doubt in my mind that Egypt has a timeless and even mystical appeal and certainly has been attracting travelers from far and wide for many centuries. Ancient civilizations have left their imprints on the landscape, creating what today must surely rank as one of the most amazing sight-seeing destinations in the world. It is a land of huge contrasts where both the ancient and modern way of life exist side by side.

I suppose one of the truly fantastic Egyptian destinations is Luxor which is set on the east bank of the Nile, about 500 km south of Cairo, and in olden times was the burial grounds of the Kings and Queens of Upper Egypt. It was part of ancient Thebes and renamed by the Arabs as Luxor — "the city of palaces".

Something not to be missed is a visit to the temple of Karnak, one of the greatest places of worship in history, with its impressive structures, and colossal statues, obelisks and halls, all of which takes on an even greater beauty at night when everything is illuminated with the wonderful "sound and light" show.

Future visitors to Luxor will be able to enjoy annually a most spectacular cultural event, namely the staging in the open air of Verdi's magnificent opera *Aida*. My wife and I were fortunate enough to be invited to this year's production which took place at the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut and was certainly the most spectacular opera

production we have ever seen.

Completed with the amazing staging and the natural beauty of the surroundings was some memorable singing and superb playing by the combined orchestras namely the Cairo Opera Orchestra and the Cairo Symphony Orchestra. One light hiccup, I did feel that if large screens had been erected on either side of the stage it would have given the audience the feeling of intimacy when the romantic arias were being sung, but no matter it was still an unforgettable experience and happily one that can now be seen every year during the month of October.

Furthermore, plans are also afoot for at least five other open air locations to have annual cultural events with artists performing from all over the world. These are truly exciting times in Egypt for lovers of music and the arts, as well as everything else that there is to appreciate and enjoy in this wonderful country.

A short journey from Luxor, across the mighty river Nile, takes you to some of Egypt's most spectacular relics. These include the tombs of the Valley of the Kings, where 64 pharaohs are depicted in enormous relief hewn in the rock, with one of the most important tombs being that of Tutankhamun, and the Valley of the Queens who also made Luxor their capital.

There are a bevy of hotels from the most luxurious, with the Sheraton and the famed Winter Palace (now known as the Sofitel Winter Palace) hotels being two of the finest.

Should you prefer a more "sporty

holiday" with some snorkeling and diving thrown in, then just arrange to visit the resort of Sharm El Sheikh, set on the seemingly endless coastline of the Sinai Peninsula and fringed by the crystal clear waters of the Red Sea.

This is a stylish beach resort with modern hotels and is ideal for those who like to combine watersports, sunbathing and bargaining in the many and varied shops, as well as taking in some exciting sightseeing.

Most of the big chains have fine hotels in this splendid resort. I would like to feature one which offers everything, and more, for those wanting a carefree time in Sharm El Sheikh. It is the Novotel Coralia situated in a delightful position overlooking the picturesque Naama Bay. The hotel offers every comfort that one would expect in a four star hotel, including attractively furnished rooms with balconies—many with fine sea views. All have direct dial telephone, minibar and air conditioning. There is a wide choice of dining options including the lovely beach front restaurant "Al Assala," a fine Italian restaurant "Al Dentra," as well as the "Black Coral" for an interesting choice of international cuisine. To cater for every situation the hotel also has an excellent coffee shop open throughout the day and night, so you need never go hungry!

The hotel is happy to arrange interesting excursions for their guests including a visit to St. Catherine, one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the world, which is today the centre of religious tourism in Sinai. The drive to

St. Catherine takes you through the very heart of the Sinai desert with its ever changing colour of natural stones and sand with the occasional glimpse of greenery and the natural beauty of wonderful rock formations, formed by the elements over thousands of years that not even a Henry Moore could have sculptured better! On your way you may come across some of the Bedouins that still live in the desert with their herds of camels, goats and sheep.

Mr. Catherine is the highest spot in the Sinai peninsula at 2,642m with Mt. Sinai being the second highest at 2,285m. Many people enjoy an early morning climb hoping to reach the peak of Mt. Sinai just as the sun is rising—a memorable sight indeed!

Just 25km from Sharm El Sheikh you can take another excursion to Ras Mohammed—Egypt's first Marine National Park. First opened in 1989, the park contains many interesting geological items such as uplifted coral reefs, alluvial plains, sandstone mountains, and sand dunes. It is also home to many terrestrial animals including wild goats (ibexes), foxes, gazelles and reptiles such as snakes and lizards. There are also many species of migrating birds, including the white stork, with the magnificent mangrove trees providing an important breeding area and habitat for both the migratory and residents birds.

For lovers of the sea, day trips can be arranged by boat for snorkeling and scuba diving. Alternatively, there are glass-bottom boats enabling you to see and marvel at the many species of fish, as well as the beautiful shades of unusual coral and ocean gardens.

The hotel also provides a variety of sports activities from volleyball, football, tennis, motor cycling, water-skiing and windsurfing.

A popular evening excursion is to attend a typical Bedouin dinner at Wadi Mena where you can also take a camel ride—it might be sensible to take your camel ride before partaking in the Bedouin feast!

All in all, Sharm El Sheikh is a wonderful resort, to do as little or as much as you like, with almost guaranteed sunshine all the year round. In the Novotel, you will find that all the staff are friendly, polite and eager to please. There are, of course, the typical attributes of the Egyptian people as a whole.

How to get your Egyptian destination? Just allow yourself to be welcomed aboard an Egyptian flight. This was the first airline to be founded in Africa and the Arab World over 65 years ago, when air travel was truly in its infancy. Today, with Egypt being one of the world's favourite holiday destinations, it is a pleasure to be able to fly from almost any major European city with their national carrier. During your flight the cabin crew will do their best to ensure that you are well looked after and when you reach your holiday destination you will certainly enjoy being in a country that you will want to return to again and again—for Egypt is, beyond doubt, a very special country!

The author, based in the UK, is an award-winning travel writer

Ozone depletion begins to worry experts

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE CURRENT climatic changes in the world, especially the dramatic rise in temperatures, are beginning to worry experts.

Scientists have attributed the phenomenon to the depletion of the ozone layer, caused by the release of harmful "greenhouse gases" into the atmosphere. The ozone layer functions as a filter, reducing the harmful effects of the sun's rays. The knock on effect of an increase in temperatures has caused ice caps to melt, leading to a rise in water levels and subsequent flooding.

The latest climatic changes experienced throughout the world, like the recent heat wave that hit this region, could be a result of the ozone hole," said Dr Ahmad Malayeri, a chemical and mechanical engineer at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

A few years ago, scientists and researchers warned of the grave consequences if the ozone hole becomes wider. Dr Numan Shehadeh, professor of Climatology from the Department of Geography at the University of Jordan, clarified that "ozone is a very light gas, and is located in a layer around 35-50 kilometers from the earth's surface." It protects the earth from the sun's ultra-violet rays, which are responsible for a number of fatal diseases, especially skin cancer. "We are lucky that the ozone hole first came to light over the South Pole, which thank God, is not inhabited by people. This gives us an opportunity to prepare for the future, should the hole get worse," Dr Shehadeh added.

However, scientists have discovered another hole this year over the North Pole. Their existence is due to the density of the atmosphere—these regions have the thinnest atmosphere. This fact forced many countries to draw up measures to prevent further depletion of the ozone layer. Many agreements have been signed in this regard, most notable is the Montreal Protocol.

In Jordan, a comprehensive survey and field study was concluded by a team from the General Corporation for Environmental Protection. It identified substances that are harmful to the ozone (like Chloro Fluoro Carbon (CFC) gases found in refrigerators), and made recommendations to removing them from the equation. Jordan acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and to the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS). A multi-lateral fund was set up as a result of the two agreements, which offers assistance to developing countries so that they can substitute the substances that deplete the ozone layer. Jordan is currently implementing such projects with the help of UNIDO.

Dr Malayeri of UNIDO has been assigned to supervise this process in Jordan, and is currently working with Jordanian factories that use these harmful substances. "The ozone layer has been damaged, and that's why the Montreal Protocol was created—to assist developing countries phase out CFCs," he told The Star. Most of the projects are expected to be completed by the end of this year.


Dr Malayeri elaborated further on the problem in Jordan.

"So far, there are 16 local industrial companies that are benefiting from the CFC phase-out projects, at a total cost of around \$10 million. In the domestic refrigerator and freezer sector, there are three factories responsible for the majority of the Kingdom's consumption of the CFC11 and CFC12 gases. Through implementing these projects in Jordan, the Kingdom will be safeguarding its ozone layer and protecting the environment." The expert pointed out that there is no ODS being produced in Jordan.

"All such substances currently in the country have been imported by the user. The total annual consumption of the refrigeration subsector was estimated at 34 metric tons of CFC11 and 13 metric tons of CFC12," he added. In total, about half a million refrigerators and freezers are in use in Jordan, nearly three percent are serviced yearly. Due to a lack of environmental awareness, know-how and equipment in this sector, service staff often use CFC12 for cleaning the cooling systems, instead of using environmentally friendly vacuum pumps.

There are five investment projects under implementation in Jordan at the moment, namely at the Middle East Co., the National Refrigeration Co., the Housing Appliance Manufacturing Co., Abidin Industrial Establishment, and the Ihsan/Tahseen Baalabaki Co.

However, the problem is not restricted to refrigerators only. "The Montreal Protocol highlights other ODS within the industrial manufacturing sectors, like solvents, halons, and some types of foam helping in helping prevent further depletion of the ozone layer."



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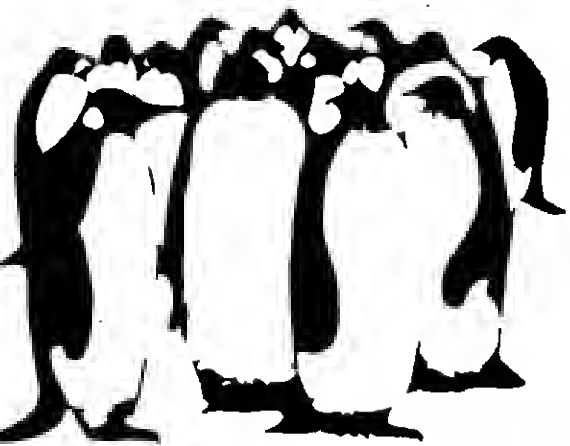
Lurie's NewsCartoon



Monica's Dry Cleaning

The author, based in the UK, is an award-winning travel writer

AROUND TOWN



A group wedding

A large group wedding was held at the Royal Automobile Club, Monday. The festival was organized by the Al Rum and other companies in the private sector. More than 5000 attended. Senator Laila Sharaf was the guest of honor. Mr Awni Al Akeh, chairman of the board of Al Rum made a point of stressing that shooting during weddings must be stopped as it leads to loss of life.

Darat Al Funun

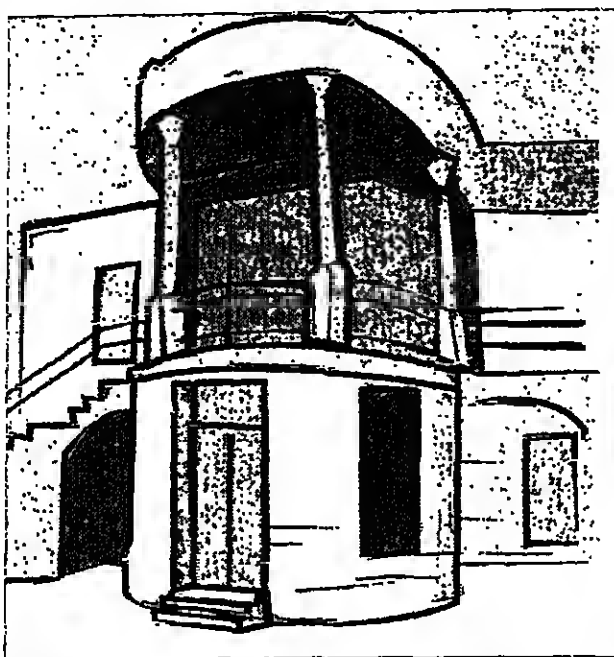
Summer Festival brightens up Amman

By Ghassan Joha
Special to The Star

OVERLOOKING the heart of Amman and housed in three historical sites of the 1920s, Darat Al Funun is dedicated to the promotion of arts, and in fostering a cultural and creative dialogue among all art lovers in the Arab World.

The Darat seeks to strengthen the vitality—and appreciation of—contemporary Arab art, and to help today's visual expressionism take its deserved place as a cornerstone in the building of a contemporary Arab culture. It was conceived as a specialized art centre, incorporating exhibition spaces, a research-and-video library, open workshops and studios, resident artists' quarters, as well as venues for the performing arts. With their massive walls and elevated ceilings, the galleries of the Darat introduce a new art exhibition concept.

Established by the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in 1993, the Darat aims to preserve the country's heritage by



restoring architectural classics of all ages, whilst making art accessible to a wider segment of society. The Darat is unique

in Jordan, occupying three buildings, and the remains of a 6th century Byzantine church.

Since 1995, the Darat has held an annual summer festival, celebrating the visual and performing arts. On 20 August, it opened the fourth summer exhibition, under the patronage of the Minister of Culture. It features six art shows in all, displaying works from both Jordan and abroad.

There is a diverse range of work on display, like the simple abstract paintings of the Iraqi artist Samer Osama, to the dilution works of Jordan's Saeed Haddadin, to the structural art of Samia Zaru, the memorial photos of Hussein Da'seh, Sahel Al-Hiyari's colourful artworks. There is also the displays of 50 Lebanese graphic artists.

Ali Maher, director of the Darat, told *The Star* that the main objective behind the exhibition is to show artworks—from both well-known and up and coming Arab artists—which will satisfy and inspire all generations.

On entering the Blue House, which houses all the paintings and is next to the

Darat's management office, you will observe the work of Samer Osama—a painting on wood using lead, cement and graphite, all mixed with acrylic. This particular work makes you think about nature and the environmental impact of man, whilst still being a visual delight. Holding a Diploma of Graphic Art from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad, Osama has participated in three solo exhibitions over the past six years and now works as a Graphic studio supervisor at the Darat.

Still in the Blue House, Saeed Haddadin has used oil and water colors on paper and canvas, depicting both the mental and psychological realities. Born in Ma'in village, near Madaba, the artist obtained his BA degree in Arts from the Lvov College of Art in Russia. He has participated in many exhibitions during his years of study at Kiev and Lvov, and is a founder member of the Jordanian Arts Association.

Another artist is Samia Al Zaru, whose emotive works are shaped from iron and rocks, and are on view in the open air gallery of the old Byzantine church. The shapes talk of the traitorous period of time, set in a historical venue. She examines the relationship between art and the dynamic world.

The next venue is in the Museum, which is filled with a wide selection of paintings and leads to the Library, which is where Hussein Da'seh is displaying his 16 photographs, titled "Memory of a Place." Da'seh describes himself as an artist and art critic, who is trying (through his reflections) to re-capture the past—the age of his grandparents) to save endangered sites soon to be demolished by man. His earlier inspirations came from the camera. "I fell in love with photography from an early age, which helped me to reflect on my experiences of living in many camps and cities within Jordan," said Mr Da'seh. Born in 1962, he studied painting and photography in Amman's Fine Arts Centre and Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts, between 1978 and 1982. As'ad Orabi, another art critic, called Da'seh's works



"Self-Portrait" (1982), one of the many on display from the Lebanese collection

"sensitive and scenographed ecologically, similar to the American spirit of land art, or to the Italian Bouvera's."

On leaving the Library, your spirits are uplifted by the talented graphical artworks, set in the Main House. There are about 110 paintings, from modern graphic artists in cooperation with the Lebanese American University (LAU) Graduates Society. Although printmaking has been a growing art form in Lebanon since the 1950s, it has only recently come to the attention of the Arab world. In their commentary, the LAU says the exhibition is designed to "contribute to our knowledge of the works of artists that have been creative in the fine art of printmaking, and to shed light on the broader topic of the contemporary art movement in Lebanon."

Still in the Main House, Sahel Al Hiyari expresses his personal feelings and awareness, through the use of emotional, free brushwork, which mixes the sensual with human faces. Mr Al Hiyari

obtained a Masters in Architecture (Urban Design) from Harvard University in 1990, as well as two Bachelor of Architecture and Fine Arts degrees from Rhodes Island School of Design in 1988.

This year's festival includes many lectures from artists and academics alike, similar to that held last Sunday by Mrs Zaru, in which she talked about her artistic experiences. This Sunday, there will be a lecture titled "Analytical Study of Plastic Art in Jordan from the Seventies," by Dr Khaz'al Al Majidi, starting at 7 pm. There will also be several music concerts during the festival, with the National Music Conservatory Group performing this Tuesday at 8 pm. Several Art films are on offer as well, like "The New York Art Scene" which will be shown today, Thursday, 27 August at 6:30 pm.

Darat Al Funun's Summer Festival will run for 40 days, and will be on display to the public until the end of September.



Main Hall in Darat Al Funun

Congratulations



Tala Shriem became engaged to be married to Mahmoud Azziz who is a dental technologist. The ceremony took place at the Amman International Hotel last week.

Omega and Cindy Crawford, at the European Masters in Crans Montana

Cindy can play better and this year, she's going to prove it. This is the promise Cindy Crawford has made to herself and her fans in anticipation of the 2nd annual Omega Celebrity Golf Tournament held on 31 August, in magnificent Crans Montana. Cindy Crawford and N.G. Hayek, Chairman of the Swatch Group and Chairman and CEO of Omega, will be the top headliner of a roster of stars from the worlds of fashion, cinema, and sports who will be competing in a friendly yet fierce fashion for the 1998 Cup.

Omega President, Michele Soffist, said that the Omega Celebrity Tournament is not just about our relationship with golf and the wonders of the sport itself, but also about the emotion of spending time together with people of different nationalities and cultures. "It's really about coming together."



Over 20 countries participated in the '97 edition. This year Omega has also invited celebrities and VIP from South America and Australia. "The

Omega Celebrity Golf Tournament is great fun," according to Eugene Cernan, last man to walk on the Moon and one of last year's runners-up. "You may win the game, but for sure you'll win some new friends." We asked Marketing Director, Venanzio Ciampa, what surprises Omega has in store for this year's tournament, but he uncharacteristically dodged behind a wall of silence. "Then there'd be no surprise any more, no?"

We did learn however that Omega will be launching its new Constellation jewelry Collection during the tournament and that famous guests among the stars will be involved in it. Michele Soffist explained, "We hope to match the beauty of our collection to the majestic mountains which surround Crans Montana."

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ Paintings by 18 artists from Egypt, Syria, Iraq Palestine and Lebanon at the Al Mashriq Gallery, Shmisani. It continues till 1 November.

■ The exhibition of the Artist Khaled Hamzeh at the City Hall in Ras Alaan will continue till the end of this month. There is another exhibition by Yassen Mohamadawi going on at the same time at the gallery.

■ The relations between man and nature is an exhibition that is currently running at the Orient Gallery in Shmisani. The exhibit, displaying the works of artists from various Arab countries ends 10 September.

■ The summer '98 exhibition continues at Darat Al Funun. This is an annual exhibition of arts and graphics from different Arab artists. Besides

the art exhibit, there is different lectures on art that is going almost everyday.

■ Rowaq Al Husn is holding a permanent exhibition by artists Mohamad Abu Zareq. The Jordanian artist is a well-known veteran in the Jordanian art movement.

■ An art exhibition by Rula Shukairy at the French Cultural Center will start on 1 September. The exhibit deals with the phenomenon of light as one of the most important issues of life. The event ends 30 September.

■ Exhibition of wrought iron furniture by Jordanian artist Saleem Bandak at Al Baydar Hall in Kan Zaman village. It continues till 17 September.

Films

■ Stargate, a science fiction movie, starring Kurt Russell and James Spader, is showing at the American Center on Thursday 3 September at 5 pm.

The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV
from 29 August—4 September

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Postman Pat (Cartoon)
3:30—Clowning Around
4:00—Neighbours (Drama)
4:30—Scandi Nature (Doc.)
5:00—French Prog.
6:00—Acropolis Bay
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Prog.
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—You Bet Your Life
8:00—Cinema, Cinema
8:30—Prison (Talk Show)
9:10—Sirens (Drama)
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Film: The Substitute
12:00—Country Music

SUNDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Pink Panther (Cart.)
3:30—Pumpkin Patch
3:30—The Adventures of the Black Stallion
4:00—American Chart Show
5:00—Royal Blood (Doc.)
6:00—French Program
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Life's Most Embarrassing Moments
8:00—People Count
8:30—Challenges
9:00—Remegade (Drama)
10:00—News in English
10:30—Titanic (Mini Series, Part 1)
12:10—Hist. of Rock & Roll

MONDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Highlander (Cartoon)
3:30—The Gentle from Down Under (Drama)
4:00—Neighbours (Drama)
4:30—Last Frontiers (Doc.)
5:00—French Program
6:00—Sea Quest (Ep. 1)



The X-Files (Drama), Friday at 10:30 pm.

7:00—News in French
7:15—French Program
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Hope & Gloria
8:00—Perspective
8:30—What's your poison?
9:10—Good Guys, Bad Guys
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Titanic (Part 2)

TUESDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—The Pink Panther Under (Drama)
3:30—Small Talk (Quiz)
4:00—Neighbours
4:30—Life Choices (Doc.)
5:00—Royal Blood (Doc.)
6:00—French Program

7:00—News in French
7:15—French Program
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Step by Step
8:00—What Would You Do?
8:30—Encounter
9:10—An Independent Man (Mini Series, Part 5)
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Film: Do You Remember Love?

WEDNESDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin
3:30—Halfway Across The Galaxy & Turn Left

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): Deep Impact
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149): The Man In The Iron Mask
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): Godzilla
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): City Of Angels
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Al Za'oon (Arabic)
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): Deep Impact
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Ninja Turles

4:00—The Album Show
5:00—French Program
6:15—Sea Quest (Ep. 2)
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Program
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Keeping Mum (Com.)
8:00—Envoy Special
8:30—Computer Chronicles
9:10—Kung-Fu
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Chicago Hope
12:00—Bugs (Drama)

THURSDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—Animated Hero Classics (Cartoon)
3:30—Animal Park (Cartoon)
4:00—L'Esprit Des Fous
4:30—Blue Water Dreaming (Documentary)
5:00—NBA Games
6:15—Sliders
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Prog.
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Family Matters (Com)
8:00—Great Romances of the 20th Century
8:30—Dr Quinn Medicine Woman (Drama)
9:10—Oprah Winfrey
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Film: Trust Me
12:00—Can't Hurry Love

FRIDAY
3:00—Holy Koran
3:10—The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin (Cart.)
3:30—The Borrowers
4:00—Film: Deadline
6:15—Les Cles De Fort Boyard (Quiz)
7:00—News in French
7:15—French Prog.
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air

8:00—Life on the Digital Edge
8:30—Understanding Computing
9:10—Babylon 5
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—The X-Files (Drama)
12:00—Big Sky (Drama)

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS
SAMEDI
17:00—Fant pas rêver
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Magazine L'œil de Colomb

DIMANCHE
18:00—Bonne espérance
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—E-M6

LUNDI
17:00—Thalassa
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Magazine scientifique

MARDI
18:00—Les romans brûlés
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Practica

MERCREDI
17:00—Ushuaia
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—E-M6
20:00—Envoyé spécial

JEUDI
16:00—L'école des fans
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Magazine L'œil de Colomb

VENDREDI
18:15—Fort Boyard
19:00—Le Journal
19:15—Aldé la Terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV



"Excellent Performance, Superb"

Oscar nominee Laurence Fishbone, Tim Roth and Andy Garcia set the screen ablaze in this revealing crime thriller, exploding with spectacular gun battles and brutal action. When the kings of the underworld wage all-out war on the city streets, it's mobster versus mobster in a blistering battle to the death.

In 1930's New York, Bumpy Johnson (Fishbone) rules the Harlem numbers racket with a rare combination of honor, dignity and raw strength. But when savage gangster, Dutch Schultz (Roth), threatens his reign with a series of bloody attacks, Bumpy knows that the only way to win is to play Dutch's deadly game. As a vicious war spins madly out of control, so does Bumpy's personal life, and soon the mobster realizes that his only way out is to investigate a dangerous plan involving one of the most feared and powerful gangsters in history—mob chieftain Lucky Luciano (Garcia).

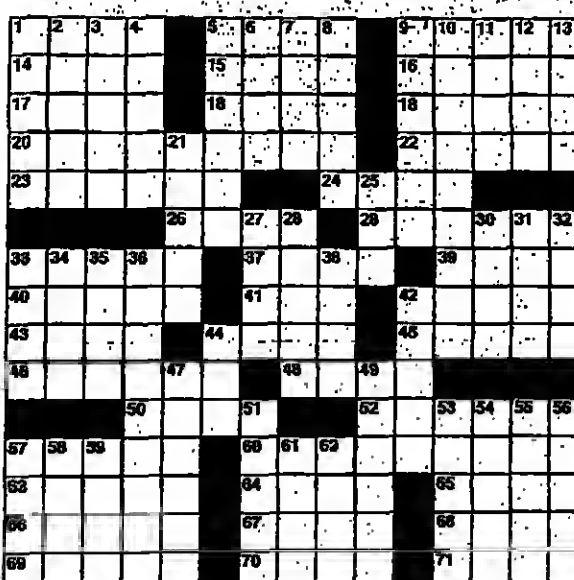
Pulsating with non-stop action and electrifying suspense, and featuring outstanding supporting performances by Vanessa Williams and the legendary Cicely Tyson, Hoodlum's a thrilling adventure, a classic gangster movie in all the best ways. (Pittsburgh Post Gazette).



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- ACROSS**
1. Aesthetically pure
 2. Nerve one
 3. Very much
 4. High-spirited
 5. Wind instrument
 6. Conspicuous
 7. Ballet movement
 8. God of war
 9. Table mat
 10. Bell device
 11. Loosen
 12. "Where... is heard"
 13. Med
 14. Concord
 15. Bales exception
 16. Sticky substance
 17. Head away
 18. Words of understanding
 19. Source of creek
- DOWN**
1. Engagements
 2. Confidante
 3. Visible
 4. Bucephalus, for one
 5. German commander
 6. Flying prairie
 7. Auxiliary verb
 8. Felled Ford
 9. Cut down
 10. Business course
 11. Hit the ground
 12. Barman is his capital
 13. Eye problem
 14. Mello at the Met
 15. Leonine features
 16. Subtle niche
 17. Normalcy abbr.
 18. Ancestry
 19. and heavily
 20. Sales phrase

This Week's HOROSCOPES

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The sun's in Virgo, which helps us all settle down to business. Virgo is very practical and hard working, very good with details.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Partnership matters come up. Settle the dispute, so you can get on to whatever comes next.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You need to settle a dispute with another person. You need this person, for some reason, and he or she needs you.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You fall in love again, maybe with the same old person. You work your fingers to the bone, hopefully not literally, but don't schedule anything else.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Take care of household matters. Let your neighbors know what you need. One of them could provide it for you.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). A friend teaches you what you need to know. Let your friend know what that would be, so he or she can.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The sun's in your sign now, and you have the distinct advantage. You'll need to have money in order to start your new projects.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're looking good, but don't let it go to your head. You still have responsibilities demanding to be handled.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You're buried in paperwork. Don't argue. Just do it. You're awesome. You can make decisions quickly and the team wants to follow you.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The sun in Virgo now means your life is going to be geared for success for the next 30 days.

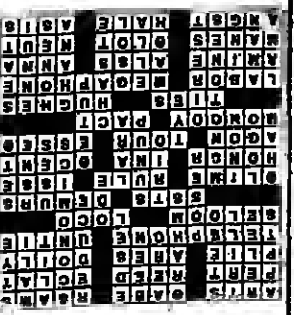
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Work interferes with your social life, but you can manage. Make contact with a foreigner and you might get to do something that you've always dreamed about.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Looks like more money going out than coming in. Send away for stuff you need to stretch your funds as far as possible.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). A legacy pays off for you. Only draw on it if you really need the money, however. It might be enough just to know it's there.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Look deeply into yourself and you'll find the very person you always wished you could be. Your energy level is high this year, and you can focus it like a laser beam.

SOLUTION:



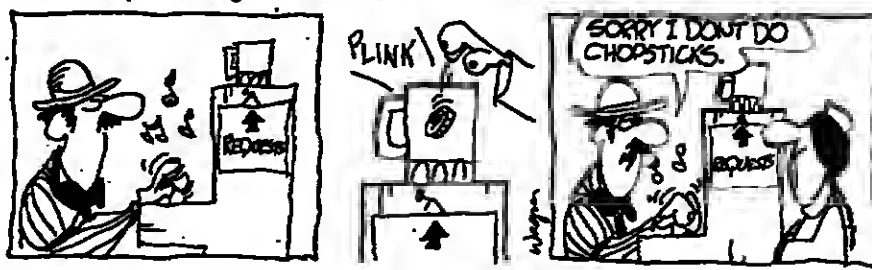
PERKY & BEANZ by Russell Myers



ELWOOD by Ben Tempelton & Tom Forman

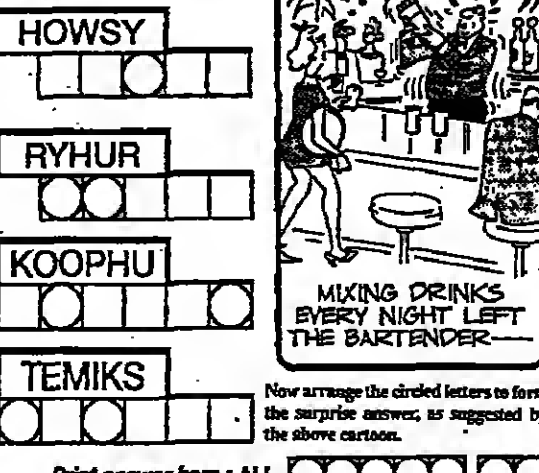


CAITRISH by Fred Wagner & Tom Cone



Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: ALL

Answer: MIXING DRINKS EVERY NIGHT LEFT THE BARTENDER

Words of Wisdom

Don't fret about growing old; many do not get that opportunity.

Even if you're on the right track, keep moving or you'll get run over.

Conscience may not prevent you from doing wrong, but it will keep you from enjoying it.

Knowing the weaknesses of others consoles our own feelings of inferiority.

Kindness costs nothing, but what it can buy is priceless.

If you distrust people, you always will find someone who will deceive you.

CHARLIE



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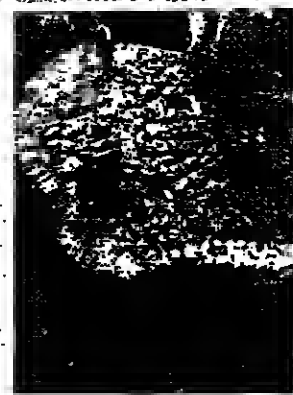
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Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Sédentarisation : vers une culture à part entière par Véronique Abis-Nijeh

La sédentarisation est un phénomène qui a provoqué une évolution spectaculaire dans l'histoire de l'humanité. Intervenu au IX^{ème} millénaire av. J.-C., ce processus est intimement lié à la naissance de l'agriculture. La domestication et la culture des plantes nécessitent en effet un soin constant et établissent une interdépendance entre la terre et l'homme qui contraint ce dernier à se fixer. C'est la raison pour laquelle on voit naître les foyers de grandes civilisations dans des zones particulièrement fertiles (vallées de l'Indus, de l'Euphrate, du Nil...). Examinons un instant quelques progrès conditionnés par la sédentarisation : les hommes sont désormais capables d'efforts collectifs, comme le prouvent le mur et la tour de Jéricho édifiés plus de 7000 av. J.-C. Ils améliorent leur habitat (cf le Jourdain du 13-08-98) et conjointement, la structure sociale évolue. La famille s'organise dans l'espace domestique qui comprend parfois plusieurs pièces parmi lesquelles on reconnaît des cuisines et des ateliers.



L'artisanat tend à se spécialiser : c'est la naissance des métiers. Dans le soin apporté à la construction des maisons et la confection des objets, on note un sens esthétique croissant. Pour les besoins de ces nouvelles sociétés, bien qu'elles soient dans une large mesure autarciques, s'établissent des échanges commerciaux. Entre 7000 et 6500 ans av. J.-C. Beidha importait le bitume et la pierre ponce de la Mer Morte, l'obsidienne de l'Anatolie et de l'est de l'Iran. En aucun cas, il ne faut imaginer Beidha et d'autres sites comme des villages isolés. Certaines traditions architecturales et religieuses se propagent ainsi d'un bout à l'autre du Croissant fertile. Avec la sédentarisation, l'homme accède pour la première fois à une culture à part entière.

La tour de Jéricho, dans son état actuel, mesure 9 mètres de haut.

Éclaboussures

Arabe donc terroriste

«Terreur». Je me demande parfois quand ai-je entendu ce mot pour la première fois. Un mot, réapparé récemment dans notre actualité, qui semble s'ajouter aux nombreuses caractéristiques de la personnalité arabe, à côté de l'incivilité bien sûr : image indélébile dans la mentalité occidentale. Peut-être était-ce pendant mon enfance à travers les films et les romans policiers qui me fascinaient. Ou bien s'agissait-il de documentaires sur les mouvements terroristes dans le monde comme la mafia par exemple. Je croyais alors que je comprenais la signification de ce mot, mais les années suivantes ont eu tôt fait de troubler ma quiétude enfantine, alors que j'étais, étonné, dans le monde adulte. L'invasion du Liban en 1982 fut ma première leçon et mon premier choc avec ce monde qui semble se complaire à mal interpréter l'attitude des arabes. Je ne comprenais pas pourquoi celui qui défend son existence, protège ses enfants de la mort et de la faim ? Et comment puis-je être un criminel quand je suis la victime ? Il n'y avait pas de réponses. Ces questions du passé reviennent aujourd'hui sans beaucoup de modifications. La formule actuelle est : «Je suis musulman donc je suis terroriste». Cette équation surgit à chaque fois qu'une explosion ou un massacre est commis contre des innocents et qu'est soupçonné «un homme aux traits proche-orientaux, avec une barbe, des cheveux et des yeux noirs, un nom comme Mohammed ou Abdullah et peut se marier avec quatre femmes» !

En fait, c'est étrange. L'islam, selon ses principes édictés sur la guerre, interdit à ses fidèles de tuer quiconque, sauf ceux qui portent les armes et les attaquent, de couper les arbres ou d'occire les animaux. Mais l'islam est pourtant accusé de semer la terreur. Que sait-il celui qui accuse l'islam d'être une religion terroriste ? Pourquoi n'écoute-t-il pas l'autre version de l'histoire ? Ce n'est pas la faute de l'islam si des groupes de criminels, s'en servent comme couverture, pour commettre leurs actes incensés. Quelle confusion dans la presse étrangère et parfois la presse arabe sur le «terrorisme islamiste» ! On se demande alors à quelle sauce nous allons être mangés au millénaire prochain. Quel nouvel adjectif va nous être collé sur le dos ? Que dirait-on si les musulmans étaient plus puissants ? Seraient-ils traités de la même manière ? ■

Shadin Suleiman

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La semaine dernière, Fayez Tarawneh et ses ministres ont prêté serment devant le prince Hassan. Première mission du nouveau gouvernement : restaurer la confiance.

Les deux derniers gouvernements n'ont pas eu une fin heureuse. Karim Kabariti était chargé de mener une «révolution blanche». Au bout d'un an, il était limogé sans ménagement après le scandale des orphelins. Le Premier ministre reçut une lettre du roi pas piquée des vers. Sans doute l'une des plus sévères jamais adressées à un chef de gouvernement en parance. De ce côté-là, Abdul Salam Majali a eu plus de chance. Les mots de sa majesté à son égard étaient empreints de gentillesse. Mais son bilan à la tête du gouvernement n'est guère plus brillant que celui de son prédécesseur. La crise de l'eau d'Amman fut vraiment, si l'on peut se permettre ce jeu de mots facile, la goutte qui a fait déborder le vase. Rarement un cabinet n'avait été aussi impopulaire, du moins depuis vingt ans.

Le nouveau gouvernement de Fayez Tarawneh parviendra-t-il à interrompre cette longue série noire ? Les attentions semblent se partager en trois courants distincts. Ensuite à vous de faire votre choix.

Premièrement, les pessimistes. Argument principal : la moitié des ministres du gouvernement Majali a été maintenue. Dans leurs rangs, on n'hésite pas à qualifier l'équipe de Tarawneh de «l'illème gouvernement Majali» (depuis février dernier, le pays était placé sous la direction d'un gouvernement Majali II). À partir de là, on peut s'interroger sur la légitimité d'un cabinet qui, pour moitié, a les mains entachées par le scandale de l'eau polluée. Enfin, pour ces Cassandres, il ne faut pas attendre d'inflexion de la part du nouveau gouvernement sur le dossier de la normalisation : Tarawneh n'a-t-il pas succédé à Majali à la tête de la délégation jordanienne dans les négociations multilatérales avec Israël ?

Néanmoins, remplacer le Premier ministre n'est pas une mince affaire. Traditionnellement, l'opinion publique, ici comme ailleurs, identifie le gouvernement à son chef : gouvernement Rifai, gouvernement Badran, gouvernement Kabariti etc... Alors, peu importe quels sont les ministres en poste, du moment que le nom du premier d'entre eux a changé. Cela peut signifier une nouvelle manière de gouverner à venir.

À l'opposé, il y a les optimistes. Pour eux, Fayez Tarawneh, ancien chef du cabinet royal, connaît bien les attentes du roi, dévoilées dans une lettre, qui représente en fait les grandes lignes du programme d'action du gouvernement. Autre atout à l'actif du nouveau Premier ministre : son équipe

constituée de «techniciens» experts (ils sont nombreux à avoir une formation d'économiste, Tarawneh compris) capables de trouver des solutions rapides

à la crise de l'eau. Mais avant d'avaloir, semble marquer une pause. Un léger temps d'arrêt qui déclenche les rires de l'assistance. Le Premier ministre se laisse aller à sourire. Lui aussi. Peut-être a-t-il alors compté du ridicule de la situation ? Fayez Tarawneh, dans ses habits tout neufs de chef de cabinet en train de faire la démonstration, que l'eau tirée par l'usine de Zai, est buvable et sans danger, n'a pas vraiment le choix. S'il s'est retrouvé à jouer ce rôle cocasse dans la station de Zai, c'est en partie à cause du scandale de l'eau contaminée d'Amman. Quest-ce que son gouvernement a fait pour régler définitivement ce problème, et surtout d'agir dans la transparence avec une opinion publique venue jusqu'à prêter l'écrit des secrets des Dieux.

Le lendemain, de sa nomination, Tarawneh a prêté donc à cette visite spectaculaire. Les caméras de la télévision publique ont au rendez-vous. Seul invité au spectacle, le photographe de l'agence officielle Peta l'immortalise en train de boire, ce que, jusqu'à présent, chacun pensait impossible. La photo est gentiment distribuée à tous les journalistes du pays qui n'ont évidemment pas été convaincus et acceptent, malgré tout, de diffuser le cliché. Comme

aux grands problèmes du pays (le chômage, la croissance, la corruption...). À cet égard, Fayez Tarawneh peut compter sur la stature et la compétence de Ta-her Kana'an, ministre du développement. Ce dernier est un peu le numéro 2 du gouvernement puisque c'est lui qui a présidé la réunion du cabinet en l'absence du Premier ministre parti rendre visite au roi à Washington.

Politique

Tarawneh attendu au tournant

Faut-il attendre quelque chose de bon du nouveau Premier ministre ? Beaucoup le voient comme l'homme de la situation. Son gouvernement devra, en tout cas, rapidement faire ses preuves.

Reste les réalistes qui n'attendent aucun miracle du nouveau gouvernement. Certes, il y aura des promesses mais après quelques mois elles se seront évaporées. Ces rabat-joie voient mal comment le cabinet Tarawneh pourrait réussir là où tous

les autres ont échoué et estiment que le chômage et la pauvreté, par exemple, sont devenus des fléaux presque impossibles à traiter.

Si vous êtes partisan de ce courant, vous souhaitez plus de transparence - un mot à la mode - et de dialogue sur les grandes questions qui préoccupent le peuple. Le gouvernement doit ainsi restaurer la confiance auprès des citoyens. Traduire en justice les responsables du scandale de l'eau serait à cet égard un signe remarquable. «Restaurer la confiance est la condition sine qua non pour espérer un changement réel», répliquent plusieurs spécialistes de politique. C'est aussi une demande du roi Hussein.

Par ailleurs, puisque l'on parle de transparence, le gouvernement devra s'attaquer efficacement à la gangrène de la corruption que certains experts qualifient d'«établissement le mieux organisé».

Enfin, cet élan pourrait s'accompagner d'une «ouverture» en direction des partis politiques, des syndicats et autres organisations : populaires. Ceux-ci espèrent notamment que la nouvelle loi sur la presse et les pub-

lications soit mise au placard ou au moins fortement amendée. Même si pour l'instant l'avenir de la loi est entre les mains du roi Hussein, l'actuel gouvernement tirerait les bénéfices d'un quelconque changement d'orientation sur ce sujet sensible. Il marquerait sa différence avec l'équipe précédente, considérée comme l'ennemi des libertés publiques. ■

Suleiman Sweiss

Transparence

Reste les réalistes qui n'attendent aucun miracle du nouveau gouvernement. Certes, il y aura des promesses mais après quelques mois elles se seront évaporées. Ces rabat-joie voient mal comment le cabinet Tarawneh pourrait réussir là où tous

Une carrière qui coule de source

D'un geste rapide, il porte le flacon d'eau à ses lèvres mais avant d'avaloir, semble marquer une pause. Un léger temps d'arrêt qui déclenche les rires de l'assistance. Le Premier ministre se laisse aller à sourire. Lui aussi. Peut-être a-t-il alors compté du ridicule de la situation ? Fayez Tarawneh, dans ses habits tout neufs de chef de cabinet en train de faire la démonstration, que l'eau tirée par l'usine de Zai, est buvable et sans danger, n'a pas vraiment le choix. S'il s'est retrouvé à jouer ce rôle cocasse dans la station de Zai, c'est en partie à cause du scandale de l'eau contaminée d'Amman. Quest-ce que son gouvernement a fait pour régler définitivement ce problème, et surtout d'agir dans la transparence avec une opinion publique venue jusqu'à prêter l'écrit des secrets des Dieux.

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section et politique. Cette image, qui a été diffusée par les médias, a été qualifiée de «scandale» par certains observateurs. Ils ont reproché au Premier ministre d'être en train de faire la démonstration, que l'eau tirée par l'usine de Zai, est buvable et sans danger, n'a pas vraiment le choix. S'il s'est retrouvé à jouer ce rôle cocasse dans la station de Zai, c'est en partie à cause du scandale de l'eau contaminée d'Amman. Quest-ce que son gouvernement a fait pour régler définitivement ce problème, et surtout d'agir dans la transparence avec une opinion publique venue jusqu'à prêter l'écrit des secrets des Dieux.

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Cinéma

Jean Reno, l'anti J. R.

Dans Godzilla, actuellement sur les écrans, il joue un espion franchouillard qui fait la nique aux Américains : le beau rôle dans un film pourtant produit par Hollywood. Mais Jean Reno a su garder les pieds sur terre. Portrait d'un séducteur ordinaire.

Ses initiales, J. R., évoquent l'homme d'affaires cynique de Dallas, la série télévisée qui a fait le tour du monde dans les années 80. Pourtant Jean Reno n'a rien de cet individu égoïste et méprisant. Il est même tout à fait le contraire. Lorsqu'il s'est vu sur la couverture d'un magazine français de cinéma, avec sa photo et ses initiales à côté, Jean Reno a eu comme un sursaut : «Cela fait très peur, croyez-moi ! Bien sûr, le cinéma est une industrie, avec la nécessité des recettes, des courbes de fréquentation, du star-système. J'ai pu le mesurer en tournant avec les Américains. Mais ce ne peut pas être le but pour un acteur : la seule chose qui compte, c'est de tourner de bons films et de répondre à l'attente que les spectateurs ont.

avoir. Prendre du plaisir et en donner, voilà ce qu'on peut rêver de mieux !». Le lion est donc Jean Reno n'est pas homme à s'afficher pour un oui ou pour un non. D'un naturel discret, il ressemble à Campana, le personnage qu'il interprétait dans Le Juguar, l'un des rares films français distribués à Amman (c'était à l'automne dernier).

Campana, c'est un ténébreux, à l'aspect taurin, solide et cohérent. Cela me ressemble un peu», avoue-t-il.

Jouer dans les films qui lui plaisent, ménager sa vie de famille, avoir le coup de foudre pour une belle voiture (il en fait collection) suffisent au bonheur de Jean Reno. Certes, il rêve d'aller planter un jour des oliviers

dans le sud de la France, de jouer Shakespeare ou encore de monter un théâtre à Londres ou à New York. Mais il a choisi de trouver le bonheur dans l'instant présent et visiblement cela lui réussit.

«Salut Enzo !» Il a tourné son premier film, L'hypothèse du tableau volé de Raoul Ruiz en 1978, il promettait sa future silhouette et «guerre». Une guerre qui avait frappé son ami, le cinéaste Luc Besson, lors de leur première rencontre. Besson n'était alors que premier assistant et était chargé de trouver des figurants pour un film intitulé Les bidasses aux grandes manœuvres. Besson raconte : «Parmi les 600 personnes que j'ai vues, il y en a eu une qui avait vraiment une vocation. Déjà, physiquement, il m'avait impressionné. Il ne m'a pas dit bonjour, il a juste hoché la tête. Moi, je ne savais pas trop quoi dire parce qu'il se taisait. Nous nous sommes revus une deuxième fois, il a été plus bavard et a prononcé peut-être quatre mots ! Il a été pris pour jouer le rôle d'un sergent et au fur et à mesure du tour-

nage, nous avons sympathisé. J'ai joué au ping-pong et je lui ai ensuite proposé de jouer dans mon premier court-métrage et dans mon premier film. Le dernier combat en 1982.

Depuis, Reno est l'acteur fétiche de Besson : Subway, Nikita, Léon et bien sûr Le Grand Bleu, le film qui a peut-être véritablement fait connaître Jean Reno au grand public.

«Aujourd'hui encore, dans la rue, on me dit : «Salut Enzo, je me dis que j'ai quand même fait autre chose. Si c'est le matin, quand je vais chercher mon pain, ça m'embête. Mais je pense au gars qui est là, qui a froid : il va voir Le Grand Bleu et ploof, il plonge. Alors je lui dis bonjour par sympathie». D'autres l'ont préféré dans Les visiteurs et le lui disent. Il écoute et leur sourit. Il risque maintenant d'être arrêté dans la rue par des Américains, qui, pas rancuniers, auront apprécié ses réflexions sur rien caricaturales et anti-Yankees dans Godzilla, la dernière bouduche hollywoodienne.

Si Jean Reno choisit ses rôles à l'instinct, il n'a fait de même avec les femmes. La sienne, il l'a abordée un jour sur les Champs-Élysées et ils ne se sont plus quittés. «Je suis toujours allé vers les filles à l'instinct. Bon, c'est vrai, cela m'a valu quelques «casquettes» mémorables ! Mais avec ma femme, je n'ai pas pu faire autrement et elle a dû sentir que je ne lui voulais aucun mal». ■

Sylvie Bullo

Portrait

Qui veut lui acheter le journal ?

Il vend le quotidien Ad-Doustour à la criée afin de nourrir sa famille. Une lourde responsabilité pour un gamin de quinze ans. Mais Marwan affiche une bonne humeur inaltérable.



Marwan et son frère se partagent le travail pour écouler tous leurs journaux.

Cela fait déjà trois ans

qu'il travaille dans la rue. Pantalons noirs comme l'encre de ses cheveux, le regard tripon et un sourire qui éclaire sa bouille ronde brûlée par le soleil, il sautille de voiture en voiture, ses journaux sous le bras : «Ad-Doustour, Ad-Doustour ! Les dernières nouvelles». Marwan donne de la voix pour qu'on lui achète sa papezasse. C'est l'aîné de ses quinze frères et sœurs (dix garçons, cinq filles). À la différence de la plupart des garçons de son âge, c'est lui qui a la charge de toute sa famille. Pourtant sa gaucheté ne le laisse rien deviner de ses lourdes responsabilités. «Depuis trois ans, je n'étudie plus. L'école est finie pour moi. Personne ne peut apporter de l'argent à ma famille. Mon père est paralysé d'une

jambette et ma mère doit rester à la maison pour garder mes frères et sœurs qui sont plus petits». Marwan est fier d'être le chef de famille et considère cette situation sans fatalisme. Le destin l'a simplement voulu ainsi.

Tous les jours, le bus du quotidien Ad-Doustour dépose Marwan à l'un des «centres» de la rue principale d'Ameiriya. Il est six heures du matin. L'homme-enfant a jusqu'à midi pour écouler ses cinquante journaux.

60 dinars par mois

Depuis quelques mois, il a embauché son frère plus jeune d'un an pour l'aider : «Je lui donne la moitié de la pile. Comme ça, nous pouvons les vendre plus rapidement et repartir à temps avec le bus. Après le travail, il retourne chez lui dans le camp palestinien de Baqa. Son déjeuner avalé, il doit aider sa mère. «Il ne sort pas jouer avec ses copains, raconte son frère, il reste à la maison mais quand il en a l'occasion, il aime regarder la télé. Pas chez nous car nous n'avons pas de télévision. Marwan reçoit 60 dinars seulement par mois. Malgré les aides de l'UNRWA, l'Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés palestiniens, son salaire n'est pas suffisant pour couvrir

toutes les dépenses du foyer (nourriture, électricité, eau...). Beaucoup d'efforts pour des rentrées d'argent minimum. Néanmoins, il ne se lasse pas de son métier de vendeur à la criée : «C'est vrai que le travail est dur. En ce moment, on est en plein soleil sans aucune protection mais j'aime ce que je fais. Je m'amuse beaucoup à vendre ces journaux. Et puis cela me donne l'occasion de connaître du monde».

Marwan, en effet, n'est pas un vendeur ordinaire. Il n'hésite pas à engager la conversation avec les clients d'une manière cordiale. Et son sourire est un argument de vente irrésistible. Il a même fini par constituer une clientèle fidèle d'automobilistes qui, chaque matin, passent par ce carrefour et sont ravis d'acheter leur journal préféré à Marwan. Quelques secondes de fraîcheur avant de se rendre au boulot. Mais ce métier public n'est pas sans ingratitude : «Parfois les gens sont méchants et nous insultent. L'autre jour, un automobiliste a essayé d'écraser mon frère pour lui faire peur, parce qu'il voulait lui vendre un journal. C'est injuste. D'autant plus injuste que la situation de sa famille ne lui permet pas, pour le moment, d'envisager une autre voie. Mais, contre mauvaise fortune bon cœur, Marwan préfère considérer le bon côté des choses et prétend vouloir faire sa vie comme vendeur de journaux : «Je ne m'imaginais pas dans un monde comme celui-ci. Un employé modèle ? Disons plutôt qu'à quinze ans, Marwan a déjà compris qu'il fallait dans la vie une bonne dose d'opportunisme. ■

Amineh Ishtay

Le mot de la semaine

«BOMBE»

Une bombe, ça fait boum, c'est bien connu. En grec, ça veut dire «boum», le bruit que fait le tonnerre. Le mot «bombe» est donc un onomatopée, un mot qui imite le son. Mais, dans le langage courant, le mot «bombe» a une autre signification. Il désigne un engin explosif. C'est un objet qui peut faire beaucoup de bruit, mais aussi beaucoup de mal.

bombardier est un instrument très grave de fanfare. Le jeu étonnant se poursuit, en s'attachant non plus à la sonorité, mais à la forme arrondie de la bombe. Ainsi, bombé signifie arrondi, gonflé. Un bombastier ou bombier de verre est un ouvrier spécialisé dans le centrage du verre. Aucun rapport avec l'expression «être la bombe» ! Cette bombe-là vient de bombance, apparue au XII^e siècle sous la forme bobance. C'est par un simple hasard que bobance est également issu d'une onomatopée : bob-bard, imitant le bruit d'un tambour. Mais finalement, derrière bombe, bobance et bobard, il n'y a qu'un jeu, celui de faire éclater la rime dans des mots jolis.

Véronique Abu-Nijme



La plus redoutée de toutes.

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Exposition

Rula Shukairy, peintre abstraite jordanienne, revient au Centre culturel français pour nous présenter ses dernières créations. Hanz Peter, critique d'art, ex-directeur du Musée de Düsseldorf, ne cache pas son admiration pour le travail de l'artiste : «Selon moi les œuvres de Rula Shukairy nous offrent la possibilité d'opprimer que nous sommes liés au phénomène le plus important de la vie : la lumière. Peu nombreux sont les peintres qui sont capables de peindre la lumière. Les tableaux de Shukairy contiennent leur propre lumière et la diffusent autour d'eux». Vernissage le mardi 1^{er} septembre au CCF à 18h30. Exposition jusqu'au 30 septembre.

Archéologie

Des vaches sauvent les dieux nabatéens

La neuvième campagne de fouilles du site de Dahrih, à quelques kilomètres au nord de Tafleih, s'achève aujourd'hui. Parmi les découvertes 98, des statues dans un incroyable état de conservation. Histoire d'un miracle.

Elles sont alignées dans la cour de récréation comme des trophées. Quatre blocs de calcaire posés sur de simples planches de bois. Étranges images sculptées qui, après presque 2000 ans, dominent le silence d'un terrain de basket abandonné en cette période de vacances scolaires.

Elles sont imperméables, modèles parfaits pour les mains expertes du dessinateur qui les reproduit de côté ou de face. Du premier bloc s'élevaient deux figures d'anges adolescents, têtes couronnées de bonnets phrygiens, regards hypnotisés : des jumeaux peut-être, tant leur ressemblance est frappante. L'autre divinité est un homme au

torse puissant. Ses yeux vous fixent obstinément et semblent hésiter entre l'autorité et la séduction. Deux oreilles pointues s'échappent d'une chevelure frisée abondante et l'oeil devine même la racine de cornes : bélien ou taureau ? Les archéologues ne se prononcent pas encore mais ces moignons de pierre sont déjà de précieux indices pour définir l'identité de ces dieux. Des cornes, des jumeaux, peut-être s'agit-il d'une représentation des signes du zodiaque, connus des Nabatéens. Hypothèse séduisante qui demande confirmation. En revanche, l'histoire de leur conservation est étonnante et relève de l'extrapolation hasardeuse.

L'anecdote est même plutôt cocasse. Nous sommes à l'époque omeyyade. Depuis les Byzantins qui l'avaient transformé partiellement en église, le sanctuaire nabatéen a perdu son caractère sacré. L'édifice est devenu, semble-t-il, une belle maison particulière. Arcolée à la façade, une étable a été construite. Des vaches profitent tranquillement de ce havre de repos avec au-dessus d'un toit fumier en prime. Quelques mètres au-dessus d'elles, les dieux nabatéens rappellent d'anciennes civilisations dont les habitants d'aujourd'hui se soucient peu. Puis un jour, ils s'effondrent sous l'effet d'un tremblement de terre.

Comme il arrive souvent, les blocs divins auraient pu se fracasser sur les dalles, mettant fin à une éternité supposée. Oui, mais c'était sans compter sur le faucon et les bovins qui ont amorcé la chute des statues.

Fabriques d'huile

L'équipe de fouille a exhumé cette année deux squelettes de vaches décapitées presque intactes, à deux mètres à peine de la façade du temple. Preuves presque irréfutables d'un sauvetage inattendu. Ainsi a-t-on retrouvé ces divinités en parfait état et deux Victoires qui, ensemble, un dieu, une Victoire, un dieu etc... pourraient constituer un échantillon de la frise

supérieure du temple nabatéen. «Il est rare de tomber sur un tel concours de circonstances», se réjouit l'un des archéologues. Il était temps car «tout ce qui, de ce temple, est resté debout, a été victime des iconoclastes après le VIII^e siècle».

Depuis 1984, date de la première campagne, le site de Dahrih n'a pas été ingrat avec ses chercheurs. Découverte des 1818 par des explorateurs, la cité nabatéenne n'avait jamais fait l'objet de fouilles sérieuses avant les années 1980. À l'époque, les richesses de Pétra semblaient inaccessibles à l'archéologie : trop grand, trop cher. L'Institut français d'ar-



Deux squelettes de bovins, presque intacts, ont été exhumés cette année. Sur ce cliché, pris par l'archéologue François Villeneuve, on aperçoit en haut la mangeoire.

chologie du Proche-Orient (IFPO) décide de s'intéresser à Dahrih. «Nous voulons fouiller un site que nous pensions cerner rapidement, et qui nous permette de comprendre comment s'organisait la vie sociale des Nabatéens», précise François Villeneuve, co-directeur de cette neuvième campagne commencée en juillet dernier, aux côtés de Zaidoun El-Muheisem, chef du département d'archéologie de l'Université du Yarmouk. Un sanctuaire, un village d'une vingtaine de maisons, deux citadelles et deux fabriques d'huile : la cité de Dahrih (appelons-la ainsi à défaut d'avoir son nom antique) offre une vision d'ensemble précieuse pour comprendre les coutumes d'un peuple qui s'installa dans la région du 1^{er} siècle av. J.-C. au IV^e siècle de notre ère.

«Nous pensions que l'annexion romaine n'avait rien modifié des traditions, qu'il y avait une continuité de civilisation nabatéenne», explique François Villeneuve, le site de Dahrih le confirme fortement : le temple, construit à l'époque romaine

(II^e siècle ap. J.-C.), est vraiment de tradition nabatéenne.

14 ans de fouilles

Un temple dont les murs principaux sont encore debout, mais camouflés dans un décor uniforme. Seule une grue haute d'une dizaine de mètres, perchée sur un promontoire, marque précisément l'emplacement du site. Il faut dire que les panneaux qui indiquaient jusqu'à présent la direction de Dahrih ont été subtilisés. Le plateau de Moab et le Wadi Al-Hasa s'aperçoivent à l'horizon. La route des Rois, qui serpente en direction de Tafleih, longe pendant quelques temps le Wadi Laaban, l'un des affluents d'Al-Hasa. Sur le flanc est de ce cours charriant des tonnes de cailloux sans eau, la grue incongrue. Difficile d'imaginer sans explication, ce qui pouvait être l'endroit aujourd'hui désertique.

«En réalité, ce village était certainement associé à une foule d'autres petits villages installés dans la zone tous les 500 mètres ou tous les kil-

omètres», poursuit le directeur. Des traces de vie d'autres communautés identiques à celle de Dahrih ont en effet été retrouvées. Reliées à la route des caravanes toute proche et à ce sanctuaire dont on comprend mieux les vastes dimensions, elles pouvaient constituer un tissu social favorable aux échanges commerciaux et religieux.

Après 14 ans de fouilles par intermittence, le gros du site a enfin été dégagé. «Nous avons fini de comprendre la zone village et nécropoles», indique François Villeneuve. Dans les campagnes à venir, l'équipe de fouille, forte cette année d'une cinquantaine de personnes,

s'attardera davantage sur le sanctuaire qui n'a pas livré tous ses secrets. D'ores et déjà, Dahrih est au programme de l'exposition prévue en 2001 par le Metropolitan Museum of New York et consacrée aux Nabatéens. Les fameuses statues sauvées par des vaches malchanceuses seront peut-être de cette autre traversée.

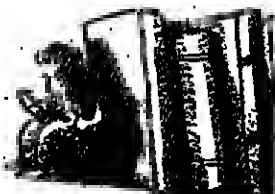
Yannick Lainé



Une divinité, une Victoire, une divinité. Voici ce que pouvait être la frise supérieure du temple nabatéen de Dahrih. L'identité des dieux reste à déterminer. Il s'agit de représentations zodiacales : à gauche, le signe des Gémeaux ; à droite, celui du bélier ou du taureau.

La solidarité des hommes pour combattre la Peste

La Peste, un roman d'Albert Camus (1947). En prêt au Centre culturel français.



Camus s'aime pas Oran. Une ville du magnifique bord de mer algérien mais qui tourne le dos à la Méditerranée. Une ville heureuse, trop peut-être, qui ne pense qu'à faire des affaires. C'est cette cité prospère qui, un matin, est mise en quarantaine, coupée du monde car la peste a fait son apparition. Châtiment divin ? Le père Paneloux le croit, du moins au début. Oran a été choisie pour subir la sanction divine parce que ses habitants ont beaucoup péché. Les fidèles, qui remplissent l'église depuis le début du fléau, méritent leur malheur. Devant les épreuves qui s'accumulent, le curé changera de discours et prêchera la solidarité et la protection de l'Église, si distante auparavant. Il meurt pourtant peu de temps après. Retour de boomerang ? Qui sait ?

La peste frappe en tout cas aveuglément. Elle ne fait pas de distinction entre les riches et les pauvres et tue les enfants innocents. Face à cette maladie cruelle, les hommes découvrent l'entraide. Camus dresse devant nous une galerie de personnages choisis dans toutes les couches sociales, qui doivent affronter leur propre destin et celui des autres aussi. C'est Rambert qui tente par tous les moyens de fuir cette ville maudite dans laquelle il s'est retrouvé par hasard. Mais au dernier moment, il se ravise et choisit d'aider les habitants d'Oran. C'est Cottard qui voulait se suicider, quitter cette société où il se sentait étranger. Au milieu de la mort, il reprend finalement goût à la vie. C'est Grand, qui, malgré le souvenir obsédant de sa femme, essaye de se rendre utile, au péril de sa vie. Au cœur de ses personnages transfigurés, la peste vient comme sonner le gong du réveil, les sortir de la torpeur dans laquelle ils étaient plongés.

Souvenir impérissable

Dans un ouvrage de Camus, on attend également que soit traité le thème de l'absurde. Elle surgit à la fin de la maladie et de l'ouvrage. La peste, c'est comme la guerre qui vient de s'achever alors que Camus publie ce roman. Ceux qui l'ont vécue en gardent un souvenir impérissable et espèrent que plus jamais elle ne reviendra. Mais dans la moire des générations suivantes, le souvenir se fait un peu moins présent, jusqu'à devenir une trace in-

visible, un chapitre dans les livres d'histoire. La vie reprend son rythme normal, sans que les hommes aient su tirer leçon du drame, et sans prévenir le désastre qui peut resurgir à tout moment. «Le bacille de la peste peut rester pendant des années endormi dans les meubles et le linge et peut-être le jour viendrait où pour le malheur et l'enseignement des hommes, la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enverrait mourir dans une cité heureuse».

Nissrine A. Shaikh



«...le jour viendrait où pour le malheur et l'enseignement des hommes, la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enverrait mourir dans une cité heureuse». Albert Camus.

Fonction publique

Le dégraissage qui fait peur

La réduction du nombre de fonctionnaires, décidée en juin dernier, est en cours. Qui garder ? Qui virer ? Les employés ne cachent pas leur inquiétude et craignent d'être victimes de l'injustice ou du wasta.

«Je ne crois pas que cette mesure touchera le personnel de l'État. Depuis 1995, le gouvernement jordanien tente de renverser la vapeur, restructuration économique et mesures concertées par le Fonds Monétaire international obligent. En trois ans, précise Nancy Bakir, 9000 personnes ont quitté l'administration mais dans le même temps, 5000 ont été engagées». C'est pour accélérer le mouvement et moderniser la fonction publique que Bassam Omoush, actuel ministre du Développement administratif, a annoncé en juin dernier une réduction de 2% sur l'ensemble des fonctionnaires. Premiers visés, «les parasites et les inefficaces», selon les propres termes du ministre. Adjectifs frappants qui ont assuré la publicité des mesures entreprises. La réduction concerne également les hommes qui ont travaillé plus de 20 ans au service de l'État (15 ans pour les femmes), ceux qui, après 30 ans, sont toujours accrochés à leur poste et ceux âgés de plus de 60 ans, sans exception. Au total, ce dégraissage doit toucher environ 4000 agents de l'État.

Recettes de cuisine

L'opération, en cours de réalisation, fait grincer les dents. La catégorie «parasites et inefficaces», surtout, ne manque pas de nourrir les craintes. Car, malgré la franchise du vocabulaire, la définition d'un tire-aucun floue même si les faits sont avérés. «Il y en a certains qui vien-

nent au travail avec leur problèmes personnels et font de leurs collègues, des psychologues. On a des femmes qui parlent de nourriture ou de leurs histoires familiales. D'autres échangent des recettes de cuisine», «on a des employés qui boivent des cafés au lieu de travailler toute la journée». Témoignages parmi tant d'autres de fonctionnaires autistes par un environnement de travail polluant.

Sur quels critères pourtant choisir les brebis galeuses ? Question éthique à laquelle le gouvernement répond par un processus de décision très «administratif». Normalement, dans chaque département, un comité issu de la direction se réunit pour étudier la situation de chaque employé et établir une liste de ceux qui doivent partir. Cette liste est ensuite soumise au ministre de tutelle puis envoyée au Premier ministre avant d'atterrir sur le bureau du Conseil des ministres pour l'accord final. Ce processus du combattant est censé assurer l'impartialité de la décision. Mais Nancy Bakir admet qu'il

«Des fois, vous êtes malade, pas vous devez faire des démarches de papier».



«Les ministres doivent remplir leurs devoirs honnêtement. C'est une question de conscience». A cet égard, cette femme de caractère, la première à avoir occupé le poste de secrétaire générale dans un ministère, n'hésite pas à donner l'exemple de son propre ministère Bassam Omoush : «Lorsqu'il a été nommé, des tas de gens sont venus le voir, des Frères musulmans dont il est issu, des gens de la tribu Bani Hassan ou de sa circonscription. Il a alors signé beaucoup de lettres de recommandations, qui, en réalité, sont inutiles car il n'y a pas de postes disponibles». Pourquoi signer ces lettres alors ? «Le ministre m'a dit qu'il n'avait pas le choix», explique Nancy avec fatalisme. En attendant la fin du dégraissage, qui se poursuit dans les plus gros ministères, les fonctionnaires ont donc pas d'autre alternative que de faire confiance à l'esprit de justice de leurs ministres.

Arine Mango et Yannick Lainé

The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul Hamid Addasi

Good preparations for the World Youth Championship in Turkey

Jordan's taekwondo teams beat Taiwan



Amman (Star)—On the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's Accession to the Throne, the Jordan taekwondo teams—both boys and girls—scored a big win over their Taiwan counterparts. The matches took place at the Rashed Center for Self-Defence, and were attended by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, The Regent.

The boys' team won eight of their 10 matches, and was represented by: Mahmoud Oroum, Waleed Khalaf, Ahmad Abu Halawah, Jameel Alkhofash, Abdullah Abu Shihab, Firas Mhufza, Faris Alomari, Rashed Hekmat, Waleed Alkhatib and Ayed Nabeel.

The girls' team won seven out of their 10 matches, and was represented by: Shatha Assaf, Rasha Msharbash, Zaha Altal-honi, Alisar Marr, Ahlam Bino, Abeer Rabab'a, Alaa Kukut, Hana Sawalha, Laila Kukut, and Sara Al Otayli.



National Basketball team prepares for a new challenge

By Abdul Hamid Addasi
Special to The Star

JORDAN'S BASKETBALL team will be participating in the William Jones Championship, due to start in the Chinese city of Taipei this Monday. It pits together the nine best teams in Asia, along with a team from Costa Rica.

In preparation for the championship, the national team held a training camp in Greece, and played several games against clubs from the Greek 1st and 2nd Divisions. The team played six matches in all, winning two and losing the rest. The first two matches were

played without the presence of some key players, like Yousef Abu Bakr and Naser Alawneh. Despite the lack of success on the court, the training camp enabled coach Mourad Barakat to assess the performance of all the players, and to prepare his team tactics for the forthcoming tournament in Taipei.

The team that represented Jordan in Greece consisted of: Hilal Barakat, Yousef Zagloul, Ayman Da'as, Faisal Nsour, Fadi Al Saqa, Yousef Abu Bakr, Naser Alawneh, Ma'ea Odeh, Ashraf Samarah, Hossam Lutfi, Jan Sahilyeb and Naser Bassam.

The Jordan Basketball Federation officials declined on Tuesday to name the final national team selection for the William Jones Championship, as they preferred to wait until after the two arranged matches against Iraq, here in Amman.

The draw for the Championship has pitted Jordan against the host nation China, UAE, Korea and Malaysia in group A. The other group includes the teams from Japan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and Costa Rica.

The two top teams in each group should qualify for the semi-finals (while the rest will play for 5th-10th places), but unfortunately for Jordan, the tournament regulations stipulate that the host team will automatically qualify for the semi-finals, regardless of its results in the preliminary rounds. This means that Jordan can only guarantee a place in the semi-final by winning its group, because if the team comes second it will lose out to the automatic host nation qualification rule.

The Jordanian team for the Championship will mainly be made up of U-22 players, with veterans like Hilal Barakat and Yousef Zagloul providing the much needed experience. The team is hoping to rekindle some of its former glories, like its fourth place in the 1986 Asian Games. In last year's Asian Basketball Championship held in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom finished in seventh position.

One thing is for sure, all of Jordan's basketball fans will be rooting for their national team in Chinese Taipei, and we at The Star wish the team the best of luck.



Fadi Al Saqa



Yousef Zagloul



Naser Alawneh

Drug charge shouldn't affect case against Webber

By Josh Barr

WASHINGTON—Chris Webber's detention for possession of marijuana on Friday night in Puerto Rico will not affect the three misdemeanor charges—including possession of marijuana—the former Washington Wizards forward faces in Prince George's County, Md., according to Prince George's County state's attorney Jack Johnson.

Webber paid a \$500 fine and signed a statement admitting to possession of 11 grams of marijuana during a layover at Luis Munoz Marin International Airport near San Juan, a US Customs official said. Webber was among a group of 10 to 15 people traveling from the Dominican Republic to Barbados as part of a promotional tour sponsored by athletic wear manufacturer Fila.

A customs official said authorities in Prince George's, where Webber was arrested last January following a traffic stop, were notified of Webber's detention. However, Webber's detention

in Puerto Rico would influence proceedings in Prince George's only if Webber's case were to go to trial and result in a guilty verdict. Under those circumstances, Johnson said, Webber's detention Friday night might influence his sentencing. "The facts in our case are unique to Prince George's," Johnson said. "It could come into play at sentencing, but I don't know if the finding in Puerto Rico is a finding of guilt for Maryland purposes."

In Webber's latest trouble with the law, drug-sniffing dogs detected the scent of marijuana in a carry-on bag with American Airlines tags that identified the owner as Jerry Stackhouse, a Detroit Pistons guard who was part of the traveling group. After customs agents discovered the marijuana, Stackhouse denied ownership of the bag and Webber said it belonged to him.

Paul Kilcoyne, assistant special agent in charge of US Customs investigations in Puerto Rico, said agents posi-

tively identified the bag as Webber's and took Webber to another area of the airport for processing. The US attorney's office did not pursue criminal charges because the amount of marijuana was considered a "personal use" quantity, and Webber paid a \$500 administrative fine and signed a document stating that he entered Puerto Rico with the drugs, Kilcoyne said.

"He basically pays a \$500 fine, we retain the contraband and he's out the door," Kilcoyne said. "We did notify Prince George's County officials of the situation and they can do whatever they have to do."

In addition to his arrest in January, Webber and former Wizards teammate Juwan Howard were named by a Connecticut woman in a sexual assault complaint back in April. However, after a grand jury investigation, no charges were filed in that incident.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

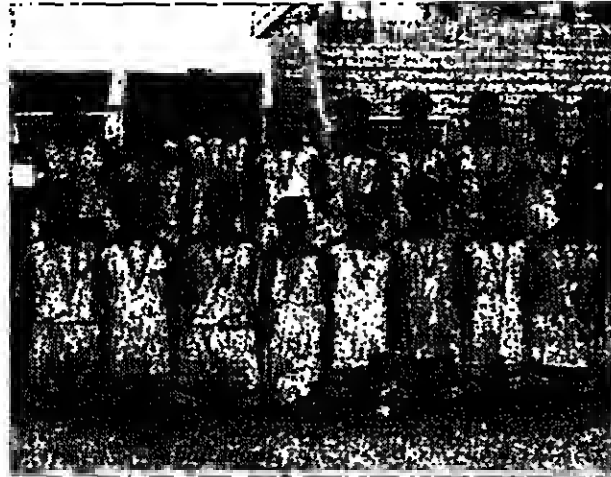


Under 16's Football League Al Hussein continue their winning streak

Amman (Star)—After scoring a surprising win over Al Wihdat (3-0) in the Jordanian league last week, Al Hussein went on to record another victory over their rivals this week. This time it was for the U-16 football league title.

The final match was held last Thursday at Al Petra stadium. Al Hussein won the game 3-1, with goals scored by Mohammed (2 goals) and Ahmad Al Batayneh (1 goal). Al Wihdat's only goal was scored by Samer Al Badayneh.

Although Al Hussein has never won the Jordanian men's league, the club keeps winning the youth competition, due to the great awareness of the club's directors.



Football Roundup

Highlights from the French first division

Girondins Bordeaux (1) AJ Auxerre (0)
Striker Sylvain Wiltord took his tally to four goals in three games by putting Bordeaux ahead after only four minutes. Right back David Jemmal crossed from the right, France striker Lilian Laslandes confused the defence with a clever dummy run and Wiltord volleyed the ball inside the near post. Bordeaux are second behind Marseille on goal difference.

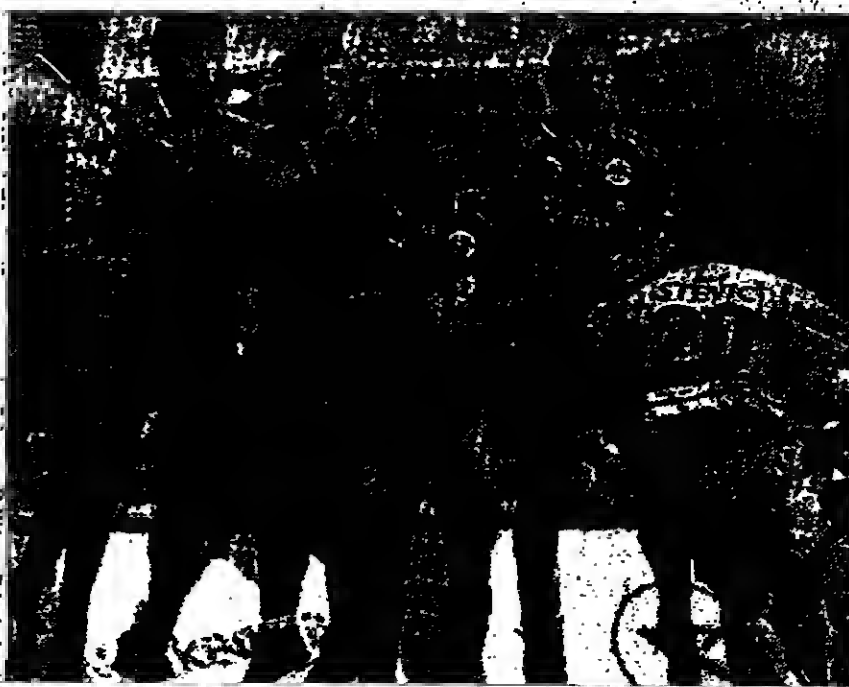
Olympique Marseille (5) Montpellier (4)
Marseille made a remarkable comeback after changing ends 4-0 down as striker Ibrahim Bakayoko punished lax defending with superb finishing. Montpellier scored their four goals in a spell of only 19 minutes but Marseille's first three came in only nine as substitute Christophe Dugary sparked an astonishing revival. Eric Roy hit the equaliser and Laurent Blanc struck the winner with an injury-time penalty.

Toulouse (0) Monaco (0)
Top at the start of the day, Monaco's performance did not please coach Jean Tigana, who said: "For us it was a bad operation. I must review a lot of things if we have pretensions to play a leading role. All the other big players (Marseille, Bordeaux, Paris St Germain) won."

Lorient (0) Olympique Lyon (1)
Playmaker Vikash Dhorasoo, signed from Le Havre, continued to impress for Lyon, laying on the only goal for Swiss striker Marco Grassi who timed his run to meet a perfect through-ball and beat the Lorient off-side trap early in the second half.

Strasbourg (0) Paris St Germain (1)
Slovakia international goalkeeper Alexander Vencel made a string of fine saves to deny Marco Simone. Patrick Loko and Nigeria's Jay-Jay Okocha before little Italian striker Simone won the match with his second goal in two games after a break out of defence by Germany's Christian Woerns.

Reims (2) Le Havre (1)
Le Havre went in front with a dubious penalty converted by Yugoslav Milutin Bec-



Action from the game between Bayern Munich and MSV Duisburg

season.
The 18-year-old signed a five-year deal during last season, but Liverpool has acted quickly to re-negotiate that contract to ward off interest in him from other clubs.
Owen's stunning contribution to England's World Cup campaign, including the breathtaking solo goal he scored against Argentina, has rocketed him to world fame and led to reports of world-record transfer offers for the striker. "I had a clause in my last contract which said that I could re-negotiate when I had played for England in a competitive international," he said. "I have spoken to the board recently and am pleased to have extended my contract until 2003. As I have said all along, all I want to do is focus on my football and hopefully help bring more silverware back to Anfield."
The new deal will almost certainly have doubled his wages, which were reported to have been around 10,000 pounds (\$16,500) per week last season.

German first division (second week)

Title favourites Bayern Munich and champions Kaiserslautern delighted their fans with home wins in the German first division on Saturday to go joint top of the league.

Hansa Rostock (3) Wolfsburg (0)
Nuremberg (3) Werder Bremen (2)
Bayern Munich (3) MSV Duisburg (1)
Kaiserslautern (2) B. M'gladbach (1)
B. Dortmund (3) Hertha Berlin (0)
Bayer Leverkusen (1) SC Freiburg (1)
Hamburg (1) Bochum (0)

Spanish Cup Football

Mallorca pulled off a surprise Spanish Supercup victory over Barcelona on Saturday, taking the second leg 1-0 to complete a 3-1 aggregate win.
Barcelona started the game well, Brazilian striker Rivaldo twice going close with long-range efforts.

But Mallorca soaked up the early pressure and after 30 minutes managed to increase their 2-1 advantage from the first leg.
A cross from the left was met by Dani, whose powerful header from 12 metres beat the diving Raul Hesp. Barcelona, looking increasingly tired, rarely threatened in the second half and Mallorca completed a well-deserved victory.

anovic. Rennes equalised through Burundi youngster Shabani Nonda before defender Ludovic Foller turned a low cross from the left into his own net to give the home side a deserved victory.

Bastia (3) Metz (0)
Metz, runners-up last season, suffered their second successive defeat and have yet to score in four matches, including the first leg of their European Cup second preliminary round tie against HJK Helsinki.

Pierre-Yves Andre opened the rout with his third goal of the season and the result could have been worse for Metz if defender Pascal Pierre had not managed to save twice on the line. Frederic Nee scored the second after a fine solo run and Portuguese striker Paulo Alves marked his debut with the third.

Latest results: Lens (4) Sochaux (0)

England: FA Premiership results (second week)

Unfashionable Charlton Athletic sit on top of the English premier league table on Saturday after thrashing Southampton 5-0 but Tottenham Hotspur are already in trouble after their second successive defeat.

Charlton (3) Southampton (0)
Chelsea (1) Newcastle United (1)
Derby County (0) Wimbledon (0)
Leicester (2) Everton (0)
Liverpool (0) Arsenal (0)
Nottingham F. (1) Coventry City (0)
Tottenham Hotspur (0) Sheffield W. (3)
West Ham Utd (0) Manchester Utd (0)

Owen signs blockbuster deal with Liverpool

England World Cup star Michael Owen ended speculation about his future on Saturday by announcing that he has signed a new five-year contract with Liverpool.
The deal was revealed ten minutes before the kickoff of Liverpool's Premiership match against defending champions Arsenal, at Anfield when Owen was presented with the division's player-of-the-year trophy for last



Marseille's tough approach paid dividends against Montpellier

THE STAR'S WORK COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Computer & IT companies!

Welcome to The Star's
Workstation, the absolute
source of what's hot and
what's not in
Jordan's IT market.
email us at
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or
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with your news and views.

Parliament passes Intellectual Property Rights Law: Jordan set to crack down on Pirates!

By a Star Staff Writer
THE JORDANIAN parliament has passed the Intellectual Property Rights Law. This means that the computer software industry will be closely monitored for any possible copyright infringements.

It is expected that a special committee or body would be set up by the Government to follow up on issues related to copyright infringement in the field of software. This is as part of the Government's intention to protect the investment of software owners and prohibit the practice of illegal copying.

This law should encourage investors to bring their business to Jordan, as they can rest assured that their intellectual property rights will be protected. This includes the computer software, video, movie, music and other industries: all of which have not enjoyed the same level of protection as in the past.

There are many opportunities for Jordan's software developers and professionals. Huge international software houses normally connect the services of local developers, in Third World countries like India or China, to benefit from their talents, on the one hand, and because they receive lower fees for 'coding'. So, as this trend continues worldwide, Jordanian software houses and developers have been receiving increasing offers in this regard. In most cases, though, talks

tell through because of the lack of proper enforcement of intellectual property rights.

There were fears that, once the 'code' was received by a software house in Amman, it could claim its ownership or



use it illegally. As for Jordan's software exporters, the law will guarantee protection of their hard work and the investment made in their products. However, it is important to note here that local pirates have maintained an 'honorable' approach, with regard to Jordanian software, refusing to copy it or pirate it. If you walked into a shop that sold illegal copies of software, you would find original copies of Jordanian software for sale. The shop owners would never agree to illegally copy an item of local software. Strange conduct for a dominantly illegal

operation, but quite 'patriotic'!

What does all this mean to the software shops, that sell illegal copies? They will have to end their illegal copying operations, or face the threat that any person or governmental body may sue their shops, and easily win the case in Amman's courts which will most definitely declare their activities as illegal!

What's more, any major or medium size company using illegally obtained software, could face a lawsuit, which will probably result in them being forced to purchase software licenses, to correct their 'copyright infringement'.

These companies are at risk, because they are targeted by major software suppliers, who are sick and tired of being unable to sell their products to them due to software piracy.

A point to be made here is that a cooperative group effort is required to make the transformation.

People need to understand what intellectual property rights is all about, and why they should observe the law. Rather than a confrontational approach, governmental or semi-governmental bodies should be advised to adopt a 'consultative' approach to allow a 'grace period'.

This period is absolutely necessary to ensure that companies and businesses can sort their software situation straight. The software industry is

Greater demand for Middle East IT professionals

THE MIDDLE East will continue to face a severe shortage of IT professionals for the foreseeable future.

According to experts, despite the fairly advanced stage of the technological environment in the Middle East which attracts a fair share of professional IT people, there will always be a proportion of people with 'doubtful' skills.

Over the past decade, IT has become the core component of many businesses from its humble beginnings as a facilitator. Qualified professionals are in demand in any field of business, but the already huge supply/demand gap for IT professionals is rapidly growing.

Greater regional and international exposure to the technological opportunities on offer in the Middle East is needed to encourage IT professionals to settle in the region and stabilize the supply/demand situation.

Ravishanker, Business Development Manager of IT People Dubai, a leading Dubai-based organization specializing in the recruitment of IT professionals at all levels, commented by saying that, "there is a huge

demand supply gap for an IT Professional. This is not a new phenomenon. IT professionals have always been in great demand because there were so few of them, but as their tribe increased so did the computers proliferate, and 'voila' the situation was worse than ever."

Describing the situation worldwide, Ravishanker stresses the huge shortage of candidates with the right qualifications. Candidates with doubtful skills can always be found readily available locally, but the drain on resources for screening and short-listing of such candidates increases.

In the United States alone it is estimated that there is a shortage of 140,000 software professionals just to address the millennium bug alone. Figures show that less than 40 percent of corporations are going to successfully address the millennium dilemma in time, a situation many other countries must also face. However, according to experts, it is still the United States that many IT Professionals target when looking for settled employment. The technological developments in the US

and the potential for promotion and advancement have for many years been serious enticements for ambitious IT Professionals.

This continued predilection of candidates to emigrate to the West (mainly the United States) is among many concerns facing employers searching for the right IT Professional. The increased role of regionally developed Arabic software applications will inevitably lead to an increase in the Arabisation of the work force but with the millennium and Euro issues looming, the supply/demand situation is unlikely to ease in the short to medium term.

However, as the technology gap continues to reduce and the economy stabilizes, the Gulf is fast becoming a first choice for many professionals especially from the Subcontinent (India, Pakistan etc) and with many Western expatriates, keen to avoid the worst of the recession.

Source: Dubai World Trade Centre LLC

News update

The Pope in cyberspace!

● Pope John Paul made a grand entry into the Internet world, as the Vatican announced that the pope's speeches will be broadcast live on the Internet.

Surfers can go to address: www.vatican.va. Roman Catholics will hear and see the Pope recite prayers and conduct Vatican ceremonies.

Interestingly, the three host computers used are named after angels: the Raphael, Michael and Gabriel. Reports state that

'Raphael' stores graphics and navigation paths, while 'Michael' protects the site from intruders and 'Gabriel' interfaces between the other two computers and the world. As of yet, the Pope doesn't have a email address. It looks like the Vatican intends to keep it that way!

● Sinbad from Sakhr
● Sakhr Software had the option to start from scratch and develop a fully Arabic browser, or to Arabise one of the popular English browsers. The second option was taken and Netscape Navigator has become Sindbad Netscape.

Sindbad works under the Arabic and Latin versions of Windows 95. The easy-to-install program features Sakhr Internet Software which includes both Sindbad Netscape 3.0 and Internet Writer, which is separately installed.

Under the Arabic version of Windows 95, Sindbad's interface carries both Arabic and English text. ■

To late to solve Y2K?

GARMINER GROUP announced that it may be too late to solve the all Year 2000-related computer troubles worldwide, especially with under 500 days remaining to the impossible deadline: midnight, 31/12/1999. The company estimates that large percentages of companies worldwide have not even started to solve their Year 2000 problem. This results could be losses of billions of dollars, due to both malfunctions and to covering the cost of correcting in some parts of the world, the situation looks grim. The Middle East, South Asia and Africa are at least 12 months behind North America and Europe in resolving the problem. The millennium computer bomb is a legacy from shortcuts by software writers, who in the name of economy expressed years with just the final two digits rather than four. ■

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

The brand suppliers are 'bullish' about hitting back: Pushing out the assemblers!

ASSEMBLED PCs have become so common in Jordan, and are said to account for over half the market in the country. This has prompted major PC suppliers to take action, and what an action it is.

According to 'inside sources', there is a consensus among the big companies who carry the prestigious PC brands, to 'push out the assemblers'. How, you may wonder?

Well, what is the only way to beat the assemblers at their own game? Of course, the price is the answer.

By continuously ensuring that major brand PCs fall in price, within a 'reasonable' range of around JD 100 from a typical assembled PC, it can be expected that most buyers would be willing to pay that little extra to ensure the quality of a respectable American or Taiwanese brand.

In figures, this means that you should be able to purchase a full multimedia, Pentium system with modem from Compaq for as little as JD 900. That is around JD 100 - JD 150 more than a typical assembled PC. For most buyers, especially small and medium sized businesses and organizations there is no question about their preference. Surely, it would be the Compaq.

The fact that prices are falling on the international market, and that more brand manufacturers are employing cost cutting technologies in production, contribute to the trend of lower priced brand PCs in markets all over the world, including Jordan.

Around six months ago, in the United States, well-known brands dipped below the \$1,000 limit. That is around JD 700. Add some shipping charges to that and you should get the current price of brand PCs in Amman, and that's not taking customs tax into consideration. The simple fact that a major PC manufacturer has set up a Middle East office means that they are better able to monitor our markets and provide better product pricing, speed of delivery and support services.

So, should assembled PC suppliers be scrambling to protect themselves from the onslaught of brand resellers? Actually, I doubt it. The whole idea is that assembled PC suppliers want to offer buyers a low priced PC system. If the Compaq, HP or IBM dealer can give them something reasonably priced to sell to their customers, then there shouldn't be a problem.

As a matter of fact, a number of well-known assembled PC suppliers I talked to have already taken on the sales of prestigious brands like Compaq and HP. These people can see the way ahead, and understand that customers like you and me will be asking for brand PCs soon.

The whole concept of lower priced brand PCs, driving out the assembled systems is revolutionary. It could completely change the face of the computer market locally and regionally.

Only then, will pride of ownership and brand loyalty return to the PC industry, reminding us all of the past—in the mid-eighties—when an IBM PC was really an IBM, and when the cloners were the top companies in the world. ■

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Warning: Bassett's 'Stella' is a fire hazard

By Gene Seymour

IF THE intent of most summer movies is to rouse oohs, aaahs and various other sound effects from their audiences, then "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" more than fulfills its mandate.

Nothing blows-up—oot literally, anyway—in this adaptation of Terry McMillan's best-selling novel about a 40-year-old black stockbroker and single mom (Angela Bassett) who travels to Jamaica on a whim and finds passionate love in the form of a 20-year-old islander, Winston (newcomer Taye Diggs).

But there's plenty of fire and heat generated by some of the more torrid love scenes to be found in any commercial Hollywood film. The lush, steamy eroticism between Bassett's Older Woman and Diggs' Younger Man is the contemporary equivalent of old-fashioned, rip-snorting bodice-ripping romance, and during one advance screening, it made half a row of 40-ish black women go "OooOoob. Whoa, and maybe just once in a while, Hmmm."

One of those "hmmms" was accompanied by a curt whisper aimed toward Bassett's character. "And she's married in real life? What is her husband going to think?"

A couple of days after this screening, Bassett laughs with gentle recognition when informed of such concern. She's heard second and third-hand accounts of similar squirming on her husband's behalf at other previews of "Stella," leading to its nationwide premiere Friday. Don't these people know she's married to an actor? Don't they know that the actor in question, Courtney Vance, had done his own share of onscreen lovemaking? Don't they know that it's—for heavens sake—only a movie?

But since it has been brought up, what does Vance think? Bassett laughs again. "It's funny to him," she says. "It tickles him. His comment usually is, 'She's a great actress!'"

No argument there. Bassett's work has earned her such accolades as "riveting" and "extraordinary" from those who have seen her performances onstage (Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, the recent New York Public Theater production of Macbeth), on TV (The Jacksons: An American Dream) and on the big screen (What's Love Got to Do With It, as Betty Shabazz in Malcolm X, and in Waiting to Exhale). Indeed, producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds said last month that Hollywood regards Bassett and Whitney Houston as

the only first-choice, bankable black actresses.

"Stella," however, is something of a milestone for Bassett in that she is the movie's undisputed star. Even with her bravura turn as rock icon Tina Turner in "What's Love Got to Do With It," she shared attention—and Oscar nomina-

presence. She runs the kind of emotional gauntlet that such great Hollywood stars as Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis and Barbara Stanwyck did.

"I can't say enough about Angela," says Deborah Schindler, who produced both "Exhale" and "Stella." "I have seen her under the most extraordinary circumstances when shooting is delayed way past dark, or

McMillan began writing the book at around the time that "Exhale" was released three years ago. Though fiction, "Stella" captures what its author has called the essence of a real-life experience she had when, after the deaths of her mother and her best friend in one year, she decided to take a trip to Jamaica, where she fell in love with a man who was 20 years younger than she was.

"I'm not sure how the sequence of events went," Bassett says, "but I remember meeting (McMillan's) young man shortly before or shortly after 'Exhale' came out."

Was she happy to take the part? Please! The major role in a follow-up to a box-office smash? And a few weeks of shooting in Jamaica? What's not to like?

Asked what the most arduous part of the filmmaking process was, the worst thing Bassett mentions is an unexpected storm that forced one scene originally intended as a twilight beach stroll to be shot indoors. Oh yes, there also was what she remembers as a nightly cacophony of tree frogs. That was annoying. But still several leagues above worst.

The best part? Bassett is challenged to isolate one high point. Working with Goldberg will suffice. The interplay between their characters is natural and unaffected enough to make one believe it was all improvised. Some of it was. In one instance, director Kevin Rodney Sullivan encouraged both actresses to improvise a hospital sequence.

"And she was a little sick that day," Bassett says of Goldberg. "You couldn't tell from looking at her, but she wasn't feeling good. Kevin got us to rehearse what we were going to say. But by the time we were rolling through all this stuff about high school dates and memories, Kevin said, 'Stop! Let's just get it on camera!'"

During one pillow-talk sequence between Stella and Winston, she tells him about growing up in a housing project and being encouraged to chase her dreams. One hears Bassett's own voice speaking through her character. She, too, grew up in a project (in St. Petersburg, Fla.), and she was also urged to keep her grades up, maintain her focus, stay true to her calling—which, after a class trip to Washington, DC, to see James Earl Jones in "Of Mice and Men," became acting.

"Who knows?" Bassett says. It might have turned out exactly the same way for her as it did for Stella, who traded her original dream of making furniture for major-league finance. "While a Yale University undergraduate, I did think that I should perhaps be more practical about my career and go to business school," says Bassett, who holds two



Actress Angela Bassett sizzles in "How Stella Got Her Groove Back."

LA Times Photo

Angela Bassett, star of "How Stella Got Her Groove Back": "I have come to understand that I possess a strength that people can feel and appreciate, a strength and sensitivity, as opposed to a kinetic flair."

LA Times Photo

conditions—with Laurence Fishburne, whose performance as Ike Turner was equally powerful. She enhanced her already considerable reputation with "Exhale," the successful adaptation of McMillan's previous best-seller, with a bold, steel-nerved performance as a betrayed wife. Yet, she was part of a core ensemble of women that included Lela Rochon, Loretta Devine and Houston, with Houston getting top billing.

But not even one of Whoopi Goldberg's finest performances (as Stella's earthy best friend, Delilah) or, for that matter, Diggs' youthful screen power can cut into Bassett's magnetic presence throughout "Stella." It is also a romantic

conditions are awful and everything just drags. And not only is she prepared—always—she will do five, six takes, and, without being told, she'll deliver something different in each one. She gives you options. And with some of such range, she not only gives you options. She gives you the full spectrum of emotions, sometimes in just one frame.

Schindler says she and McMillan, the movie's co-executive producer and co-screenwriter, agreed before the book was published in 1996 that Bassett (who turns 40 this year) was the only one who could play Stella.

Yale degrees, a bachelor's in Afro-American studies and a master's from the drama school. "But that thought lasted for maybe about a year. And it was in my junior year that I decided to give it a shot, to give my dreams a shot."

To say things turned out OK would be understating matters severely. She moved swiftly from Yale productions, two Broadway roles, and has now achieved such status among Hollywood actors that she no longer has to audition for roles, even relatively minor ones like that of the presidential aide in last year's "Contact."

"Contact" also gave her something to do while waiting for "Stella" to be developed and written. Playing Lady Macbeth last winter to Alec Baldwin's Macbeth also filled time between movie projects, but it meant much more to her: "I hadn't been back to the stage in so long. I missed that intimate contact with a live audience, the way you get into the emotion of a character. In movies you're doing small moments again and again and again, building a scene. But there's something about the passion you bring to

the stage, the way you have to be bigger on the stage and reach all the way to the back of the theater, and I could pull it back and shape it and do whatever I want with it."

Still, for all of her consummate stagecraft, Bassett has become one of the best at letting her face project conflicting emotions in front of a camera. One keeps going back to that riveting sequence in "Exhale" in which her character, Bernadine, in silent, agonizing rage, responds to her abandonment by jamming the entire contents of her husband's wardrobe closet into his BMW and setting the whole thing ablaze.

"I tend to be self-conscious about the camera, so I do my best to forget it's there," Bassett says. Referring to that scene, she says she had abandoned herself to her character's emotions to the point where she could say, "Oh the cameras are on? Well, I don't CARE!" And then she laughs the way she never would if she were in character. ■

LA Times-washington Post News Service



Actress Salma Hayek and boyfriend Edward Atterton arrive for the premiere of the new film "S4," at Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. Hayek portrays "Anita," the coat check-in girl in the film about the famous New York City disco nightclub during the 1970's. The film which also stars Myers, Ryan Phillippe, and Neve Campbell and opens in the United States 28 August.

Reuters

Australian Wedge-tailed Eagle



An endangered Australian Wedge-tailed Eagle holds a rabbit in its talons at the Bundabong Sanctuary in Townsville 20 August. The bird was rescued from a road suffering from a broken wing and as a result, has been kept in captivity, waiting for a means of obtaining food.